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Obtaining Grace: Locating the Origins of a Tamil Śaiva Precept

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Obtaining Grace: Locating the Origins of a Tamil Śaiva Precept

by

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Dedication

To my wife, Paola, and to my parents

For all the love and support

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Obtaining Grace: Locating the Origins of a Tamil Śaiva Precept

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The central term in Tamil Śaiva religious vocabulary is *aruḷ*, designating Śiva's fundamental principle. It is widely regarded that Śiva's *aruḷ* spawned the cosmos, and to a practicing Śaiva, only Śiva's *aruḷ* can free a soul from the cycle of *saṃsāra* or rebirth. In a Śaiva theological context, the term debuts in medieval *bhakti* (devotional) hymns of the *nāyaṉmār* (poet-saints); over the course of four centuries (ca. 6th – 9th cents CE) the theological nuances of the term became increasingly intricate. In the last major devotional work produced, the *Tiruvācakam* (ca. 9th cent CE), Māṇikkavācakar expanded the semantic latitude of *aruḷ*, using it in ways that the previous Śaiva poets had not. Māṇikkavācakar created a space for *aruḷ* to become the Śaiva identity mark *par excellence*. He used the term to indicate an array of theological aspects—Śiva himself, Śiva's grace, any action that Śiva undertakes, the path of knowledge that assists devotees in understanding the nature of the soul, and the mercy and compassion that Śiva has for his servants. While this list is not exhaustive, it points to the semantic breadth of *aruḷ* as a Śaiva theological concept.

This dissertation is an analysis of the semantic evolution of the concept *aruḷ* through three genres of Tamil literature: classical (*caṅkam*) heroic and love poetry, and medieval Śaiva devotional poetry. I utilize a variety of texts for the project. From the eight anthologies of *caṅkam* poetry, I translate and analyze poems from the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, *Aiṅkuṟuṉūṟu*, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Akanāṉūṟu* (ca. 1st century BCE to 4th century CE). From Śaiva bhakti literature, I focus on Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*. In reading from these texts, I trace the semantic continuity and interruption between the classical secular poetry and the medieval devotional poetry. I argue, among other things, that the cultural underpinnings of the concept remain intact as the term becomes incorporated in the technical vocabulary of Tamil Śaivism. The Śaiva authors were thus able to develop a new and unique style of religious literature that resonated with the cultural and literary past.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this dissertation is a single term in the Tamil language—*aruḷ*. This term has signified different ideas and concepts throughout the history of Tamil literature. Most notably, during the medieval period (fifth – sixteenth centuries CE), members of the Śaiva community adopted the term from a pre-existing secular literary tradition, widened its semantic range, and employed it in *bhakti* (devotional) hymns to signify Śiva's fundamental nature.[1] *Aruḷ* was cast as that principle of Śiva that spawned the cosmos, and it was widely regarded that only through Śiva's *aruḷ* was a soul able to achieve liberation from the cycle of *saṃsāra* or rebirth.

I have traced the term across a span of approximately 1,300 years, through varied literary genres, to understand the development of its importance and weight as a Śaiva theological concept. Generally speaking, though, *aruḷ* is not the exclusive domain of this one particular sectarian group. The term is also found in Tamil Vaiṣṇava literature as well, indicating an element of Viṣṇu that allows for the emancipation of the soul; but literary history suggests that *aruḷ* is more closely associated with Śiva than Viṣṇu. I base this on the comparatively disproportionate amount of attention the term has received from Śaivite authors writing in Tamil, particularly from the Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntins, a group of prolific theologians who wrote fourteen principal treatises on the nature of Śiva and of the soul beginning in the 12th century CE.[2]

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[1] I use the more common spelling 'Śiva' in this dissertation; rather than the Tamil spelling 'Civaṉ'; however, I do not change the spelling when I cite materials that use the Tamil version.

[2] The first of the fourteen Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta texts, the *Tiruvuntiyār*, was composed around 1147 CE by Uyyavanta Tēvar; however, this text has not received much attention by academics or practitioners. Meykaṇta Tēvar's *Śivañāṉapōtam*, the third Tamil Siddhāntin text, composed around 1221 CE, is considered the most important the Tamil Śaiva Siddāntin tradition. The eleven subsequent compositions all expand and elaborate on Meykaṇta's ideas. For a detailed discussion of the fourteen Tamil Siddāntin texts, see Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Love of God According to Śaiva Siddhānta: A Study in the Mysticism and*

The concept's roots, however, lay outside religious literature. The term initially appears in the eight anthologies of classical Tamil or *caṅkam* poetry (c. 100 BCE-450 CE). While there are some religious elements in these texts, the corpus largely revolves around secular themes, namely those of love, politics, and war. In the classical anthologies, *aruḷ* did not yet convey the religiosity that it came to bear under the Śaiva banner. In translating select pieces from this collection, however, it became apparent that there was firm foundation for *aruḷ*'s theological breadth. The question that remains to be answered, then, is why did the Śaiva authors choose the term *aruḷ* to indicate Śiva's fundamental energy? What were the cultural forces that propelled the term to the theological forefront of Tamil Śaivism? Furthermore, over the course of centuries and within different genres, how did the semantic range of *aruḷ* widen to incorporate a Śaiva worldview?

As the social and religious milieu changed with the rise of *bhakti* cults in the Tamil-speaking region in south India, so too did *aruḷ*'s significance. A survey of the Śaiva *bhakti* sources reveals a slow process of semantic expansion and systematization. Prior to the composition of any of the Tamil Siddhāntin texts, the Śaiva *nāyaṉmār*

Theology of Śaivism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 175-326. Furthermore, the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition in Tamilnadu is theologically related to the Kashmiri Śaiva Siddhānta school, whose adherents were composing tantric texts probably beginning around 400 CE. As Alexis Sanderson suggests, the Tamil Siddhāntins acknowledged Kashmiri Siddhāntin exegesis as normative in metaphysics and liturgy. See "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions," in *The Religions of Asia*, ed. Friedhelm Hardy (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 131. Sanderson's claim, however, is not entirely accurate. There are differences between the two traditions. For one, the Tamil Siddhāntins intentionally composed their works in Tamil, not Sanskirt. Their works were not mere translations from Sanskrit to Tamil; they were original compositions. As Richard Davis points out, the shift in language also marked a shift in doctrine. The Tamil Siddhāntins decreased the role of ritual that was central in Kashmiri Śaivism, claiming proper knowledge was sufficient to achieve liberation. The Tamil Siddāntins also considered the Śaiva *nāyaṉmār* (poet-saints) as members of their Tamil Śaiva lineage; and in doing so, they accepted that devotion, too, was sufficient for liberation (in combination with proper knowledge, of course); see, Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshipping Śiva in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 18. For a further discussion of the relationship between the Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntins and the Śaiva *nāyanmār* see, Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 8.

("leaders," literally; but generally, "poet-saints")[3] employed *aruḷ* in their hymns to describe Śiva and his exploits.[4] In the pleas for their souls' release from ignorance, they asked Śiva for his *aruḷ*; and when they described him in one of his many mythscapes, *aruḷ* would designate a variety of activities. This semantic expansion began with Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār (ca. fifth-sixth century CE), who is said to be the first Śaiva *bhakti* poet, and concluded with Cēkkiḻar's *Periyapurāṇam* (ca. twelfth century CE),[5] before being systematized in the Siddāntin literature.

Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's poetry is replete with poetic iconography of Śiva, mythological exploit, and descriptions of the cremation ground, where she dances and dwells. Her works do not reflect an emphasis on theology and philosophical speculation that is prevalent with some of the later *nāyaṉmār*, and her dwelling in the cremation ground, too, is a practice more extreme than subsequent leaders undertook; however, the intensity of her devotion as reflected in her hymns is inspiring.

The term *aruḷ* is utilized with increasing frequency in the *Tēvāram* [6] (ca. sixth-seventh centuries CE), a compilation of Śaiva *bhakti* hymns from three authors—Tirunāvukkaracar, Cuntaramūrtti, and Tiruñāṉacampantar (the tradition refers to these three as the *mutal mūvar* or the first three, signifying their importance, not their chronology). However, in the *Tēvāram* the term *aruḷ* had yet to reach its fullest potential.

[3] The term *nāyaṉmār* stems from the Sanskrit verbal root √*nī* meaning "to lead." *Nāyaṉmār* is the plural form; *nāyaṉār* is the singular. The term also refers to Śiva.
[4] For a broader discussion of the *nāyaṉmār*, see Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Bhakti* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); and Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*.
[5] The *Periyapuraṇam* (ca. 1135 CE) is the hagiographical account of the lives of the sixty-three Śaivite poets.
[6] The etymology of the title *Tēvāram* is not fully clear. For a detailed discussion of possible origins and meanings, see Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, pp. 21-22.

In Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* ("*Sacred Utterances*"; ca. ninth century CE), there is a greater consideration of *aruḷ*, demonstrating, in my opinion, a theological development in the Śaiva *bhakti* tradition. This text pays more attention to the theological and philosophical categories that come to dominate the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta philosophical tradition in the twelfth century.[7] In fact, Nirampavaḻakiya Tecikar quotes lines from Māṇikkavācakar's hymns to substantiate his sixteenth-century commentary on Umāpaticivācāriya's *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ*[8] ("Fruit of Divine Grace"; ca. fourteenth century CE), which, among other things, is a philosophical systematization of Śiva's *aruḷ*.[9] Aspects of Māṇikkavācakar's poetry are similar to those of his predecessors in that he details his experiences on his spiritual journey; however, his intense attraction to the metaphysical places his work in a category removed from the earlier poets. This allowed him to bridge the gap between devotionalism and the emphasis on knowledge (as exemplified in the later Tamil Siddhānta philosophy). What we see, then, over the course of several centuries, is a gradual semantic expansion of terminology in the poetic

[7] K. V. Zvelebil, for instance, claims Māṇikkavācakar is the greatest of the principal Śaiva poets and in his poetry, apart from the autobiographical material, one may discern a bloosoming of Śaiva Siddhānta philosophical categories; see *Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pp. 143-144.

[8] Umāpaticivācāriya's *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* (*Tiru*=divine; *aruḷ*=grace; *payaṉ*= fruit) is one of the primary texts of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta school. There are fourteen principal Tamil Siddhāntin texts, of which Umāpaticivācāriya composed eight: *Śivaprakācam*, *Vināvenbā*, *Pōṟṟiparotai*, *Koṭikkavai*, *Neñjuvitutūtu*, *Saṅkarpanirākaraṇam*, *Uṇmaineṟiviḷakkam*. For a collection of essays on Umāpaticivācāriya see, *Śri Umāpati Śivācārya—His Life, Works and Contributions to Śaivism*, ed. S. S. Janaki (Chennai: Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1996).

[9] For example, in commenting on the seventh verse in the *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* (*āṉā vaṟivā yakalā ṉaṭiyavarkku vāṉāṭar kāṇāta maṉ*; trans. "Celestials do not perceive Him, the Great One; for devotees he is not separated, having become all-pervasive knowledge."), Nirampavaḻakiya Tecikar adds "even though God is everywhere, He is seen by those who worship with true love; he is there, unseen by others, this purpose is said. To illustrate this Māṇikkavācakarsuvāmikaḷ graciously said " You will hide yourself for the mind of devotees;" "Even in dream, for gods you are rare. I extol!" Even those who are born gods by the result of good actions do not know him; it is clear without saying that those who do bad actions do not know him. If one wants to know Civaperumāṉ, one should do Civanalviṉai ("actions that are good for Śiva," i.e. temple worship) By saying "in form of knowledge," it is understood that one should know him only by true knowledge bestowed by his grace. This true knowledge comes with performing Civanalviṉai…" See, *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ*, p. 14.

tradition, and a subsequent systematization of theological concepts with the Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntins.

The lingering question is, why this particular term? In *caṅkam* poetry, *aruḷ* was used to define the paradigmatic relationship between king and subject and also between romantic lovers. In this context, in which one person bestows his or her *aruḷ* on the other, there is a structural parallel in the Śaiva *bhakti* works. In regard to the former relationship, it is the king who grants *aruḷ* to his subjects; and in the latter, it is primarily the male lover who imparts his *aruḷ* to the woman. There is a persistent anxiety and uncertainty found in those actors waiting to receive it. They long for the other's *aruḷ* because it is transformative, positively altering lived reality. Upon receiving it, for instance, one may benefit financially or gain physical and emotional stability; however, in the poems presented below, all of the actors long for *aruḷ* because they are not experiencing it.

In the Śaiva religious context, devotees wait and long for Śiva to impart his *aruḷ* to them. When it is finally granted, they believed all results from past actions would be nullified; ignorance of fundamental reality would be replaced with proper knowledge; and the soul would reach its potential and be free from *saṃsāra*. Much like in *caṅkam* poetry, the devotees display angst and uncertainty as they strive to cultivate the conditions proper for receiving it; the Śaivas, too, long for it because they are not experiencing its full effects. In both contexts, the actors are aware of *aruḷ*'s transformative power, and thus, long for it; but in the Śaiva context, the authors describe a more catastrophic anxiety because without it they are doomed to rebirth, with its ensuing sorrow and suffering.

Life without Śiva's *aruḷ* was tantamount to a spiritual wasteland where a soul is devoid of proper knowledge and wedded to the joys and sorrows of the five senses.

Intellectually, the devotees understood that the mundane world to be deceptive, that the only true reality is Śiva himself; and in order to move closer to him, they renounced material possessions and social ties. The devotees, however, could not fully experience true reality without Śiva's *aruḷ*. Thus, the difference in the actors' angst is one of degree based on what is to be gained. In the classical poetry, the results—money, social prestige, loving commitment, intimacy, and emotional security—are fundamentally, perhaps ironically, the antithesis of what is described in the *Tiruvācakam*. In the religious context, experiencing *aruḷ*'s effects allowed one to transcend materiality and emotional attachment for other human beings. There is, of course, an emotional relationship between Śiva and his devotees; one that is built on intimacy and love. This, however, is categorically different than the emotional bond between human lovers. In attending to the etymology of the term, then, we must understand the conceptual transference as the process of disruption of lived experience, either positively or negatively.

§ 1. TEXTS UNDER CONSIDERATION

I have translated from a variety of texts for this dissertation. From the anthologies of *caṅkam* poetry, I have translated selections from four of the eight texts: *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, *Akanāṉūṟu*, *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, and *Kuṟuntokai*; from the Śaiva *bhakti* literature, I focus solely on Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*. I have limited my study to this particular devotional text because Māṇikkavācakar embodies, in my opinion, the apex of the *bhakti* tradition. As I mentioned previously, he is a transitional figure between earlier forms of devotion (beginning in the fifth and sixth centuries CE) and the later Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntins. He also uses the term *aruḷ* much more frequently than the Śaiva poets or *nāyaṉmār* who precede him, indicating a closer scrutiny of this theological category that comes to dominate the Siddhāntin material. Chronologically, Māṇikkavācakar is the last of the

four principal Śaiva poets; and, categorically, the tradition describes him as the embodiment of knowledge (*ñāṉam*; Skt. *jñāna*). From the Siddhāntin literature, I have also consulted Umāpaticivācāriyar's *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* and Nirampavaḻakiya Teckiar's sixteenth-century commentary on Umāpati's text.

While it is necessary to read these texts sequentially to follow the movement of this term, it is also important to read the works together to see the cultural influence of this theological concept. Under the Siddhāntin aegis, *aruḷ* became synonymous with the Sanskrit term *śakti* (power) and *jñana* (knowledge). Although these are appropriate glosses in certain respects, such translations hide the regional flavor of the tradition.

§ 2. DIFFICULTIES IN DEFINING AND TRANSLATING *ARUḶ*

As I implied above, aruḷ carries different connotations within each of the literary genres under investigation. The Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (DED) 190 categorizes √*aruḷ* as meaning 'to be gracious to, to favour, to speak graciously, to command, to grant, to bestow.'[10] Its nominal counterpart(s) are defined as grace, mercy, favor, benevolence, command, and order.[11] The etymology of *aruḷ* is somewhat problematic. George Hart traces the etymology of the noun as stemming from the verbal root √*ār* (to be full, to spread out, be satisfied, eat, drink; n. completeness, fullness). The syllable *uḷ* is used as a suffix to create a noun from a verb.[12] Thus, the term should be *āruḷ*; however, the loss of the long vowel 'ā' is problematic. The noun *ārvam* (affection, love, desire), too, is suggested as being in a semantic relationship with *aruḷ* (DED 323). Don Handelman and David Shulman also lay out the difficulty in tracing the etymology

[10] Thomas Burrow and M. B. Emeneau, *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 17.

[11] There are two nominal forms stemming from the verbal root *aruḷ*—*aruḷ* and *aruḷal*. In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the *akam* texts, and the *Tiruvācakam aruḷ* is the noun used most often.

[12] George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil, Their Milieu, and Their Sanskrit Counterparts* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 27.

of the term. Similar to Hart, they lean towards associating *aruḷ* with √*ār*, despite the loss of the long vowel.[13] While the origins of the term are nebulous, this association indeed describes the condition of one possessed of or of one who has received aruḷ because, conceptually, it is all pervasive and brings completeness. The suggested relationship with *ārvam*, too, is interesting because *aruḷ* can also carry a similar semantic range in certain contexts.

As will be demonstrated in the ensuing pages, the definitions found in the DED and other Tamil-English dictionaries are not exhaustive.[14] The DED displays *aruḷ* as a blanketing term that designates disparate actions. For instance, the act of speaking and the act of giving are discrete. One may imply the other at times, but they still remain distinct; and yet aruḷ can convey both. This suggests, then, that the definition is purely context-driven. One focus of this dissertation is to uncover the reasons for the disparate definitions. The complexity of this concept and its shifting semantics obviously prevented those in the business of dictionary compilation from being able to provide a holistic definition of the term.

The intricacies of the term's theological nuances have forced a standardized translation into English that has the tendency to misrepresent and reify the concept. That translation is 'grace.' David Shulman and Don Handelman point out this trend in *Śiva in the Forest of Pines: An Essay on Sorcery and Self-Knowledge*. "There is an unfortunate tendency to translate this critical term, in nearly every context, as 'grace,' with its heavy

[13] Donald Handelman and David Shulman, *Śiva in the Forest of Pines: An Essay on Sorcery and Self-knowledge* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 41, fn. 69.

[14] In addition to the *DED*, the most comprehensive Tamil-English dictionaries for studying classical and medieval Tamil are the *Tamil Lexicon* (Madras: University of Madras, 1982), vols. I-VI and Supplement; J.P. Fabricius's *Tamil and English Dictionary* (Madurai: De Nobili Press, 1972). This dictionary was originally published in 1779, titled *A Malabar and English Dictionary*; and M. Winslow, *A Comprehensive Tamil-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2004; originally published in 1862).

Christian connotations."[15] In my opinion, the problem is not so much the term 'grace'—though it does present its own difficulties—as it is the standardized glossing of aruḷ with a single term. 'Grace,' it is true, can bear a Christian theological load; however, 'grace' may also be used generally to indicate divine activity, divine presence, and divine reality.[16] When I translate *aruḷ* as 'grace,' it is in the latter sense that I am using the term. This translation, however, is a bit unformulated because it presupposes a Śaiva theological structure to the concept. Unfortunately, it is difficult if not impossible to translate all the nuances of a religious perspective in a single term, let alone divine activity or intention. The Śaiva authors themselves do not present a cohesive systemization of aruḷ, free from contradiction. The Christian concept of grace, too, has undergone change over the course of two millennia, indicating different ideas in different historical periods.[17] Thus, if we keep this fact in mind, using the translation 'grace' generally should be less troublesome. Furthermore, my interest here is to understand how Māṇikkavācakar understood and conveyed the concept; rather than elucidating the agreement and contradictions in the theological system of a particular Śaiva tradition.

In respect to translation, we thus arrive at a difficult juncture, particularly in regard to poetry. How does one succinctly translate a term that is so loaded with philosophical and theological nuances? One must consider the cultural implications within the context of a poem. In its widest sense, *aruḷ* indicates all that Śiva undertakes. In specific contexts, it also demonstrates, for instance, the mercy, love, generosity, and compassion Śiva has for his devotees. *Aruḷ* was not a complete neologism; these emotional nuances were present within the concept prior to its inclusion in Śaiva

[15] Don Handelman and David Shulman, *Śiva in the Forest of Pines*, p. 40.
[16] For a general discussion on grace see, Thomas O'Meara, "Grace," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, vol. 6, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillian Reference USA, 2005), pp. 3644-3648.
[17] O'Meara, *op. cit*., pp. 3644-3648.

vocabulary: the *caṅkam* poets used the term *aruḷ* to convey the above dispositions, and the Śaiva poets later capitalized on these nuances and provided a divine source for these emotions. Thus, the translation 'grace' is not appropriate in every context because it carries an objective sense that does not convey the intimate bond between Śiva and devotee. My translations of *aruḷ* in the *Tiruvācakam*, then, tend to move between the emotional components (i.e. mercy, love, compassion, etc.) of Śiva's *aruḷ* and the more specific theological aspects (i.e. grace), which will become clearer through the course of this dissertation.

§ 3. Devotional Literature and Worship in Medieval Tamil Śaivism

Before tracing *aruḷ*'s semantic development, it is necessary to briefly introduce distinguishing characteristics of the group that brought *aruḷ* to its place in the religious vocabulary of Tamil Śaivism. During the fifth century of the Common Era a new style of religious worship had emerged. This approach was to worship Śiva or Viṣṇu through *bhakti* (devotion) as a means to attain spiritual liberation. In Hinduism, the term *bhakti* signifies two different, but related issues. It is a technical term that indicates devotionalism as a mode of worship; it also indicates a genre of literature composed in the first-person perspective that glorifies the supremacy of the deity and describes the struggles on the path to liberation.

In regard to worship, *bhakti* was innovative. As many scholars have indicated, it was an ecstatic devotionalism that cut across established hierarchies of orthodox Hinduism.[18] Worship was personal, and any could participate regardless of social

[18] While the characteristics of *bhakti* have been discussed in detail elsewhere, it is important to summarize the qualities of this mode of religious worship. For previous discussions see Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, pp. 1-13; Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 1-18; Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, pp. 17-41; and A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 19-55.

categories, such as caste, gender, and class. The first Śaiva *nāyaṉār*, for instance, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār (ca. 5th cent CE), was a woman. Traditionally, women were not religious specialists, but with the advent of *bhakti*, gender no longer dictated one's role in religious matters. Emphasis was placed on one's relationship with the divine—one's loving devotion to god was evaluated within the wider religious community, not characteristics obtained either at birth or through social constructs. This was a far more egalitarian approach to worship than orthodox Hinduism had allowed.

In the Tamil Śaiva context, the exemplars of *bhakti*, the *bhaktas*, were called the *nāyaṉmār*. The tradition counts sixty-three who composed hymns in worship to Śiva.[19] These poets had a tremendous impact on religious life in Tamilnadu as they traveled from temple to temple singing of Śiva's glory. In their peregrinations, the *nāyaṉmār* created what Indira Peterson has described as a sacred geography that is still recognized today among Śaivites in Tamilnadu.[20] Among the *nāyaṉmār*, Māṇikkavācakar is touted as one of four principal poets. His life and the beauty of the *Tiruvācakam* still provide an archetype for how devotees should worship and understand Śiva, but in his lifetime, there seem to have been mixed reactions to his austerities.

In the *Tiruvācakam*, Māṇikkavācakar describes himself and the community of Śaiva *nāyaṉmār* or *bhaktas* in relation to the general population. The group he describes himself as a member of lived for the most part near Śaiva temples, though, as I mentioned above, Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār spent her days worshipping Śiva in cremation grounds, much like the Kāpālika sect. The *bhaktas* covered their skin with sacred ash in imitation

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[19] Indira Peterson has argued quite convincingly that Cēkillār, the author of the *Periya Purāṇam*, the hagiography of the sixty-three *nāyaṉmār*, adopted the number sixty-three in response to the *Trisastilaksanamahāpurāṇa*, a tenth century Jain text that recounts the lives of sixty-three revered Jains, see her article "Śramanas Against the Tamil Way: Jains and Others in Tamil Śaiva Literature," in *Open Boundaires: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John Cort, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 179-82.

[20] Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, p. 13.

of Śiva. Māṇikkavācakar also describes himself as wearing a garland of cassia flowers, which is another favorite adornment of Śiva. The *bhaktas* were prone to frenzied dance; they would sing in worship, often losing control of their emotions and bodies.

The picture Māṇikkavācakar describes regarding the attitude of the people he encountered on his peregrinations between temples is one of scorn and disgust. He recounts in several places that people considered him a madman and called him names, such as *pēy* or "demon."[21] Two responses he gives to the public's attitude and negative reaction to him reaffirms his position as on the fringe of society. In lines 68-70 of the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval," the fourth hymn in the text, Māṇikkavācakar writes, *cakam pēy eṉṟu tamai kirippa/nāṉ oḻintu nāṭavar paḻitt urai/ pūṇatu vāka* ("While the world laughed at me, calling me "demon," I abandoned shame. The people's despised words, I took as ornaments"[22]); in the third verse of the fifth hymn, the "Tiruccatakam," he writes, *mattam maṉamoṭu māl ilaṉ eṉṉa maṉ niṉaivil/ottaṉ ottaṉ colliṭa ūr ūr tirintu evarum/ tattam maṉattaṉ pēca eṉ ñāṉṟu kol cāvatuvē* ("Having thought that I a madman, people speak what they think proper. I wander from village to village. Whatever they thought, they spoke. When will I be dead?"). It seems evident that his external markings—ash covered body, near to total nakedness, and perhaps the occasional garland of cassia flowers—and frenzied behavior were associated with practices looked down upon. It is difficult to know who Māṇikkavācakar was referring to specifically. He does criticize non-Śaiva groups, such as Buddhists and Jains; but he also critiqued orthodox Hindus, such as those who emphasized study of the *śāstras*, for improper worship. Thus, Māṇikkavācakar denounced any and all who were oppositional to Śiva and Śaivas. This perception

[21] The *DED* 3635 also defines *pēy* as a devil, goblin, fiend; madness (as of a dog), frenzy.

[22] All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. I cannot accept full responsibility for the translations. Dr. Sankaran Radhakrishan and Dr. R. Vijayalakshmy directed me in this endeavor; however, any error in the translations are my responsibility.

changed over the course of time. By the tenth century, perhaps less than a century after he lived, Māṇikkavācakar's legacy was integrated into a major festival sponsored by the Cōḻa rulers (9th-13th cents CE) at the Tillai (Citamparam) temple.[23]

While their ecstatic devotionalism may have brought scorn, ironically it is also the reason they are revered—the *nāyaṉmār* are the Tamil exemplars of surrender to Śiva. Consider, for instance, lines 77-86 from the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval":

> I do not condemn his grace (*aruḷ*) as trivial; I was like a shadow,
> not knowing separation from the pair of sacred feet.
> I worshipped in front and followed behind without disdain;
> in that direction, I yearned for You, my frame softened,
> its structure gone.
> The river of love overwhelms its banks.
> All good senses focus on a singular point, and I cry out, "O Lord!"
> Having lost control of my speech, my hair bristles;
> my flower-like hands come together as a bud and my heart blooms;
> at the same moment, my eyes fill with joy and tears.
> Everyday he nourishes a love that does not diminish.

The above excerpt demonstrates well the *nāyaṉmār*'s style of worship. We witness a singular focus coupled with a total loss of control. Māṇikkavācakar describes himself as speaking gibberish, wailing and laughing, and having his hair stand on end. While frenzied asceticism was common among Śaivas, the practitioners were often generally classified, as Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty) points out, with the dregs of socity because they were perceived as antithetical to orthodox religious institutions and ritual.[24] The *nāyaṉmār*, however, were not necessarily opposed to orthodoxy or to the status of the brahmin priests. They merely chose to engage in a mode of worship that, outwardly,

[23] Paul Younger, *The Home of the Dancing Śivaṉ: The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Citamparam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). I describe this festival in greater detail, see pp. 115-117.
[24] Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 67.

appeared extreme in comparision to temple ritual. While these practices were not mainstream, they did open a new door through which to worship Śiva.

With *bhakti*, the centrality of the brahmin priest in religious matters began to wane. A person no longer needed to visit a priest for absolution. One was able to cultivate a relationship with god that was rooted in intense love, and based on the intensity of one's love, the deity would, in turn, respond with burning the sins of past action or *karma*, paving the way for liberation from *saṃsāra*. In this regard, *bhakti* is indeed personal, and in a sense, strips away authority from religious specialists. I do not wish to overstate the claim here. The hymns of the Śaiva *nāyaṉmār* do not reflect a disdain for the brahmin priests. They merely saw the efficacy of ritual as less than their love for Śiva. This was not a path of passivity, as Karen Prentiss has pointed out; rather, *bhakti* is marked by an active participation in serving the divine. [25]

Bhakti also refers to a genre of literature that, at its core, was supposed to be composed spontaneously, not crafted. In terms of literary standards, this purported spontaneity was revolutionary, creating a distinct genre of literature. For the first time in the history of Indian religious literature do we witness authors revealing for their audience (both mortal and divine) their personal, subjective experiences on the quest for spiritual liberation.[26] Singing (and only later, writing) from the first-person perspective was innovative and served to embed a socio-religious consciousness that provided accessibility to one's own storehouse of emotions and a connection to the wider Śaiva community. As the poets revealed their own personal trials and tribulations, so too did

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[25] Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, pp. 3-11.

[26] As we will see in Chapter Two, the authors in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* also wrote from the first-person perspective. See George Hart and Hank Heifetz, *The Puṟanāṉūṟu: Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom* (New Delhi: Penguin books, 2002), p.xxiii.

the audience participate in their emotions and feel a more intense connection with their religious community.

In the case of Māṇikkavācakar and the other *nāyaṉmār*, then, the two categories of *bhakti* are not mutually exclusive. Each *tōttiram* (song of praise; Skt. *stotra*) was the core offering in their worship. They eschewed the orthodox practice of temple ritual in favor of a more hands-on approach through singing and making pilgrimage to the many Śaiva temples and shrines that peppered the Tamil countryside.

As I mentioned above, while the *nāyaṉmār* were not necessarily oppositional towards orthodoxy as many of the subsequent *bhakti* poets were, particularly in north India, they did believe that the embodiment of participatory devotion and loving service was more fruitful than ritual.[27] They surrendered to Śiva while singing of his magnificence and his all-pervasiveness at the sites that they visited, opening the doors for all to participate in worshipping him regardless of their caste. Listening to a hymn, then, could evoke a spiritual experience that would forge a more intimate bond with Śiva; something that was previously only available to select groups.

One of the ways in which the *nāyaṉmār* were able to fully dedicate themselves to Śiva and undertake their peregrinations in loving service of him was through renouncing social ties. This, however, is a bit misleading, in that they ultimately joined another community, the *bhakti* community of the Śaiva *aṭiyārs* or slaves.[28] A.K. Ramanujan evoked and elaborated on Victor Turner's notion of structure, anti-structure, and *communitas* as a means to understand the nature of the *Vīraśaiva bhakti* community.[29] This argument also applies to the Tamil *nāyaṉmār*, as Glenn Yocum subsequently

[27] Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhaki*, pp. 17-24.
[28] The term *aṭiyār* literally translates as "they of the foot." The translation "slave" reflects better, I think, how the śaivas perceived themselves in relation to Śiva.
[29] A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*, pp. 34-35.

pointed out.[30] Ramanujan argued that "…the bhakti-communities, while proclaiming anti-structure, necessarily develop their own structures for behaviour and belief, often minimal, frequently composed of elements selected from the very structures they deny or reject. The Vīraśaiva saints developed in their community, not a full-scale 'Communitas' of equal beings—but a three-part hierarchy, based not on birth or occupation, but on mystical achievement: the Guru, the Elders, and the Novices."[31]

This situation mirrors the Tamil Śaiva community as presented in the *Tiruvācakam*. Much like the Vīraśaiva poet, Mahādēvi, Māṇikkavācakar does not explicitly describe a three-tiered hierarchy.[32] Māṇikkavācakar does make it clear, however, that the only true *guru* is Śiva himself, and it was Śiva who presented him to the community of *aṭiyārs*.[33] Māṇikkavācakar frequently describes worshipping the other *aṭiyārs*. This is interesting for several reasons. First, Māṇikkavācakar views the other *aṭiyārs* as incarnations of Śiva himself, for he would never worship a mere mortal. Second, he views himself as a novice in comparison with the other *aṭiyārs*. He often describes their behavior as juxtaposed to his own. For instance, in the twenty-seventh verse of the sixth hymn, the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam," he sings,

> Will you leave me, your servant who has fallen, lost control,
> having gone between the mountain of breasts of the women
> with beautiful smiles, who are like beautiful gems?

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[30] Glenn Yocum, "Madness and Devotion in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*," in *Experiencing Śiva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*, eds. Fred W. Clothey and J. Bruce Long (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1983), pp. 29-30.

[31] A.K. Ramanujan, *op. cit*., p. 35.

[32] Ramanujan claims that Mahādēvi's poems 45, 60, and 77 celebrate the 'mystical hierarchy;' however, in his translations of these poems, we see only the mention of the community, not an explicit description of the community's structure. There is an implicit structure to the community in Mahādēvi's poems, in that she was unable to know Śiva until she joined the community, which suggests that she was directed by an adept to understand the nature of god and the ordering of the cosmos. Thus, Śiva is the *guru*, the adepts would then be the elders, and she would be the novice; see Ramanujan, *op. cit*., p. 35.

[33] Elements of the refrain in the twenty-sixth hymn, the "Aticayappattu," state this: *aṇṭu taṉṉaṭiyariṟ kūṭṭiya*.

> O Pure Gem! Having mercifully taken me as yours, having placed me in the middle of congregated slaves who weep and whose whole bodies tremble. Show me again your feet that give knowledge![34]

We see in this verse that Māṇikkavācakar views himself in contradistinction to others in the Śaiva community. This passage, of course, stands in contrast to the one above in which he has lost control of his speech, is laughing and crying simultaneously, and so on. Here, Māṇikkavācakar reveals for his audience a sexual transgression that differentiates him from the other *aṭiyārs*. While he describes the community of slaves as being in a Śiva-induced rapture, his ecstasy is stirred by the mountain of breasts. In "Kōyiṉ Mūtta Tirupattikam," Māṇikkavācakar also laments that Śiva has given his *aruḷ* (grace) to the other devotees, but not to him. Thus, he is placing those other *aṭiyārs* above him, in the position of elders.

Māṇikkavācakar also contrasts those in the Śaiva community with those who are not. There are condemnations of heretical (Buddhist) philosophy, of the Lōkāyats (or materialists), of sectarian debaters, and also of those posing as if they had received Śiva's *aruḷ*. All of these groups stand in contrast to the Śaiva communtiy. In his own words, Māṇikkavācakar places himself on the proper path: *aṟimāl koṇṭu cārum/ katiyatu paramā aticayamāka* ("Having developed a desire to know [you], with astonishment, I cling to the highest path [*śivajñāṉam*]").[35] The others are not on the same path, and he is biding his time, pursuing the conditions necessary in order to experience Śiva's *aruḷ*. As we can see from these examples, Māṇikkavācakar's depiction of the Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* community is similar to how Ramanujan described the Vīraśaiva community.

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[34] koḻumaṇi ērntai yārkoṅkaik kuṉṟiṭaic ceṉṟukuṉṟi/viḻum aṭiyēṉai viṭuti kaṇṭāy meym muḻutuṅ kampit/ taḻum aṭiyāriṭai ārttuvait tāṭkoṇṭaruḷi eṉṉaik/ kaḻumaṇiyē iṉṉuṅ kāṭṭu kāṇṭāy niṉ pulaṉ kaḻalē
[35] Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval, lines 71-2.

One of the important elements of the text and its connection to the wider *bhakti* community is its performative quality. As I mentioned above, one of the marks of *bhakti* literature was its spontaneity and first-person perspective. The hymns were to flow out of the person as they entered into a state of rapture. The emotional components in the hymns were to elicit a particular response from the audience. Norman Cutler describes the ideal audience to a person singing a *bhakti* hymn as predisposed to the composition's special effects. A poem (or hymn), he states, requires the audience to actively participate in the creation of meaning, and through this participation the content may engage the psyche of its audience at a deeper level than a natural utterance. Cutler is loosely likening this process to the aesthetic theory of *rasa* (juice; essence) in Sanskrit literature. *Rasa* is an audience-oriented theory that is concerned with deep emotion, emotion beyond what is ordinarily felt on a day-to-day basis. It is pure emotion, devoid of any individuation. However, one must use the ordinary, personal emotions (*bhāva*) as a springboard for experiencing *rasa* or the essence of the emotion. The difficulty is eliminating the everyday distractions so that a person may experience this unadulterated emotion. In this sense, *rasa* requires an informed receptivity from the audience, and when the distractions are eliminated, the audience may transcend their ordinary emotions and experience the distillation of that emotion, which is *rasa*.[36]

The difference between Sanskrit notions of *rasa* and Śaiva *bhakti* is that, in *rasa* theory, the poem is understood to be fictive. This is not the case with the Śaiva hymns, in that the hymns are not entirely free from the everyday world. Cutler argues that the audience is able to have a *rasa*-like experience if the poem is "reincarnated" in the imagination of the audience. In a ritual context, the audience must be receptive to the

[36] Norman Culter, *Songs of Experience*, pp. 58-61; 73-74. Cutler provides a more in-depth explanation of *rasa* than I have given here.

emotion in the poem. In this way, the audience (in a ritual context) can "reincarnate" the original context of the hymn because, by nature, the hymn is not bound to a historical context, in the sense that, say, a classical Tamil poem on kingship is. But the *bhakti* poem has the ability to migrate through space and time if the audience is willing to serve as a psychological vessel for its reincarnation; and this also happens with a total identification with the poet.[37]

As Martha Ann Selby notes, the *Tolkāppiyam* delineates a Tamil version of an audience-oriented aesthetic theory that differs in kind from the Sanskrit notion of *rasa*. This is *mey-p-pāṭu*, which Selby translates as "physical manifestation of emotion." This is a direct phenomenon, in that when the audience sees a performer experiencing a particular emotion (as displayed on their physical form), they too will feel that same emotion or recognize the performer's emotion intellectually, which may evoke a different, but related emotion, such as compassion for the performer's fright. The difficulty in fully engaging this theory is that there is a lack of any substantive commentaries on the theory, save for Pērāciriyar's thirteenth-century commentary on chapter six of the the *Tolkāppiyam*. As Selby notes, Pērāciriyar is responding to a commentary that is no longer extant. She cites K. Paramasivam's suggestion that the earlier commentary was probably arguing that the audience was to feel exactly what the performer felt. The ambiguity in the extant commentary, as she points out, is whether or not the audience actually felt the same emotion or some related emotion.[38]

In my opinion, the theory of *mey-p-pāṭu* is more applicable to the *Tiruvācakam* and other *bhakti* works than the Sanskrit theory of *rasa* is, precisely because of the

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[37] Norman Cutler, *op. cit*., pp. 73-4.
[38] Martha Ann Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night—Love Poems from Classical India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 21-23.

purported spontaneity of the hymns. The Tamil compositions were not to be as sculpted or premeditated in the same way that a Sanskrit poem was. As Māṇikkavācakar or any other *nāyaṉmār* would enter into an ecstatic state and begin emotively to describe Śiva's mythscapes, his exploits, descriptions of his physical form, the pain of their own trials and tribulations, the wonder at Śiva's magnitude, or the longing to achieve union with the divine, then the physical display of emotion would make room for the audience to also achieve a similar or related emotion. Māṇikkavācakar also describes himself entering such states. Consider an excerpt from the first verse in the "Tiruccatakam":

> My body shakes at your fragrant foot; I lift my
> My hand above my head, tears swell, my heart glows;
> I banish all falsehood, I extol you: O Victorious One, Praise!

Such descriptions, however, seem more like testimonials to either who Māṇikkavācakar saw experiencing these states or what he himself experienced. If one were to lose the power of speech, as noted in a previous verse, how then could one sing coherently?

One of the differences between the Sanskrit *rasa* theory and the Tamil *mey-p-pāṭu* is that, seemingly, the latter did not require artificial circumstances, the absence of daily routine, for the audience to experience the emotion that the performer was experiencing. It was visible to the eye. As Norman Culter points out, a reason for this was that the Tamil poeticians (notably those associated with *caṅkam* poetics) were less aware of a distinction between the "real world" and a fictive poetic world. In this regard, Cutler notes that the concept of *mey-p-pāṭu* was similar to *anubhāva* (consequent emotions) in Sanskrit *rasa* theory; and demonstrates an attempt to incorporate *rasa* theory into Tamil poetics.[39] But as both Cutler and Selby point out, the eight emotions of *mey-p-pāṭu* correspond exactly to the eight *sthāyibhāvas* (dominant emotions that structure an

[39] Norman Cutler, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-2; 75n.

audience's experience of the world) in Sanskrit theory, but they are used in a completely different sense (as *anubhāva*), which suggests either a misunderstanding or a reworking of the Sanskrit theory.[40]

Unlike the earlier Tamil poets, Māṇikkavācakar and the other *nāyaṉmār* were more concerned with the psychology of the audience. The Śaiva poets were proselytizing, which is poignantly demonstrated in their invectives against other sectarian groups, most notably the Buddhists and Jains.[41] As K. A. Nilakanta Sastri points out, beginning around the fifth or sixth century CE many were fearful that the whole Tamil land was on the brink of converting to Buddhism or Jainism.[42] The Śaiva *bhakti* poets, then, made a radical departure from the earlier *caṅkam* poets who, as Cutler describes, were concerned with the poem as a self-contained unit that expressed "emotional universals," and were not concerned with the psychology of the audience.[43] While the poetic structure of the *bhakti* hymns may have mirrored *caṅkam* poetic structure, the intention behind the poetry was vastly different. Given the historical situation at the time, the hymns could be viewed, on one level, as propaganda, and the ways in which the poets behaved would have certainly added an alluring element to the totality of the Śaiva vision.

When we understand that the audience was a consideration in the hymns of the *nāyaṉmār*, we can make a case for using *mey-p-pāṭu* as a framework for understanding the relationship between the audience and the poet. Māṇikkavācakar certainly

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[40] *Ibid*., p. 75n; Selby, *op. cit*., p. 22.
[41] Tiruñāṉacampantar devotes a verse in each of his hymns to castigating the Buddhists and Jains, see Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, pp. 10-11: there are quite a few invectives towards these groups in Cuntarar's hymns as well. See David Shulman, *Songs of the Harsh Devotee—the Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṉār*. Māṇikkavācakar, while more reticent than his earlier counterparts, finds opportunity to tell his audience of the folly of Buddhist wisdom.
[42] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975, fourth edition), pp. 422-3.
[43] Norman Cutler, *op. cit*., p. 62.

demonstrates the eight manifest emotions that the *Tolkāppiyam* describes: laughter, grief, disgust, wonder, fear, pride, anger and joy; and one may also explain the emergence of his emotions through at least one of the four stock sources for each emotion.[44] What is interesting about applying this aesthetic theory to the *bhakti* tradition is coping with the first-person perspective of the hymns. The character, which in an *akam* poem, for instance, was fictional, is actually present, as in classical heroic poetry; and Māṇikkavācakar, the lead protagonist of the *Tiruvācakam*, would sing about his emotions while presumably manifesting his emotions physically. Thus, the audience had a two-fold obligation: to understand the poetics of *bhakti*, which amounted to knowledge of the poetic conventions of *caṅkam* poetry, which were mingled with Śaiva mythology and theology, and the hagiographies of Śaiva saints. In this regard, the audience should be, as Norman Cutler suggests, a receptacle willing to experiencing more than just beautiful lyricism; as well, the audience must be actively engaged visually, as one would with a temple image or an iconographic sculpture. This participation emphasizes the importance of *darśan* ("seeing"). As Diana Eck notes, seeing a *sannyāsin* or religious ascetic (such as Māṇikkavāckar) was in and of itself auspicious. The ascetics were living symbols of the ideal of renunciation to achieve the highest spiritual goal.[45] To witness the external emotional signs of a performer who was simultaneously a real person and symbolic of a religious ideal would create a space for the audience to experience emotions that they would otherwise not experience.

This discussion also brings us indirectly to the issue of language, particularly the use of Tamil over Sanskrit. The medieval period is well known for the emergence of

[44] V. Murugan, *Tolkāppiyam in English* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2001), pp. 515-8.
[45] Diana Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p.6.

religious literature in regional languages, particularly in Tamilnadu where the *bhakti* tradition is believed to have begun. This innovative and creative genre of devotional poetry exploded onto the scene and within several centuries had influenced religious compositions in regions where Indo-European languages, such as Hindi and Punjabi, were spoken. Traditionally, the Sanskrit language had been reserved for conveying religiosity. In this era, however, the trend of using one's mother tongue emerged, and Tamil was pitted against Sanskrit as the medium for conveying religiosity. On the whole, this was a pronounced but gentle rivalry. In discussing Nammāḻvar (b. 9th-10th cent CE?), a Tamil Vaiṣṇava *āḻvār*[46] (poet-saint), A. K. Ramanujan comments on this linguistic competition best.

> …[God] is not a hieratic second language, a Sanskrit to be learned, to be minded lest one forget its rules, paradigms, and exceptions; he is one's own mother tongue…[G]od lives inside us as a mother tongue does, and we live in god as we live in language—a language that was there before us, is all around us in the community, and will be there after us. To lose this first language is to lose one's beginnings, one's bearings, to be exiled into aphasia…Thus the early poet-saints required and created a poetry and a poetics of the mother tongue. Their self-image did not permit the poetry or poetics of a learned, courtly tradition, a scriptural or decorous language apart from oneself, an art that one masters and elaborates with care and anxiety, and never with any complete confidence.[47]

Like most other organic things in this world, language does not exist in a vacuum, insular and xenophobic. Ramanujan's passage, while eloquent, does not reveal any reciprocal influences that the two languages may have had on one another. By the early medieval period, the Sanskrit language had already left its mark on Tamil vocabulary. In fact, it is unlikely that one could read early medieval Tamil literature without stumbling across a noticeable amount of Tamilized Sanskrit terminology.

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[46] *Āḻvār* is from the verbal root *āḻ* meaning "to sink, plunge, dive, be deep, be absorbed, immersed, etc." (*DED* 338). *Āḻvār*, then, carries the significance of one being immersed in god.

[47] A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammāḻvar* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 137-8.

In his analysis of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the classical text on Tamil grammar and poetics, Takanobu Takahashi shows that the composition of the text and its final redaction occurred between the first through sixth centuries CE. He suggests that the earliest layer of the *Tolkāppiyam* (chaps. 1, 3, 4 and 5), composed between the first and third centuries, does not reflect a high degree of Sanskritization; however, a few of the chapters (6 and 7) in the later stage of composition (4th –6th centuries CE), though not all composed during this time (chaps. 2, 8 and 9), reflect a high degree of Sanskritization.[48]

For example, in *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva—A Study of Māṇikkavācakar's* Tiruvācakam, Glenn Yocum postulates that fourteen percent of Māṇikkavācakar's vocabulary is of Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit) origin. He bases his assertion on an etymological analysis of the vocabulary in Māṇikkavācakar's forty-eighth hymn, "*Paṇṭāyanāṉmaṟai*."[49] As Yocum correctly points out, the loan words present in the *Tiruvācakam* are neither jarring nor intrusive; but they are indeed present. While Māṇikkvācakar did utilize a large percentage of Tamilized Sanskrit terminology in the *Tiruvācakam*, the technical religious terms were conveyed primarily in Tamil. For instance, the term *catti* (Skt. *śakti*= Śiva's manifest energy) appears only twice in the text; however, *aruḷ*, which is glossed as *śakti* in the Siddhāntin writings, appears in more than three hundred and sixty instances.

As I mentioned above, in Śaiva philosophical texts, *aruḷ* has Sanskrit equivalents (*śakti*, *anugraha*, *karuṇā*, or *kṛpa*).[50] Philosophically, there are similarities between these terms. The Tamil term, however, has cultural resonances not present in the Sanskrit

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[48] Takanobu Takahashi, *Tamil Love Poetry and Poetics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 20-24.
[49] Glenn Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva: A Study of Māṇikkavācakar's* Tiruvācakam (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1982), p. 55.
[50] The theological breadth of *aruḷ* has the ability to cover the semantic nuance of each term (*śakti*-active power of a deity; *anugraha*-favor, kindness; *karuṇā*-pity, compassion; *kṛpa*-tenderness, compassion).

terminology. One way of getting to the core of these differences is through tracing the term across time and literary genres. What we find is that *aruḷ*'s usage in each genre is different, largely due to the nature of the texts themselves—poetry is distinguished from philosophy; however, if a term prominent in a poetic tradition becomes systematized in philosophy, it is difficult to divorce the shades of meaning that lent the term its prominence. In regards to *aruḷ*, there were cultural reasons why the Tamil Siddhāntins adopted the term and systematized it. Thus, it becomes difficult to think of *aruḷ* in a Siddhāntin context without incorporating its previous semantic history in literature.

In previous English translations of both the *Tiruvācakam*[51]and the fourteen principal Siddhāntin texts,[52] *aruḷ* was frequently glossed as 'grace.' In G. U. Pope's translation of the *Tiruvācakam*, for instance, he glossed *aruḷ* with 'grace' in almost every instance in which the term appears. In regard to the Siddhāntin tradition, David Shulman and Don Handelman offer an insightful note on *aruḷ*'s implications:

> There is an unfortunate tendency to translate this critical term, in nearly every context, as 'grace,' with its heavy Christian connotations. *Aruḷ* can, it is true, correspond in Śaiva texts to Sanskrit *anugraha*, the god's compassionate giving to his servants. More often, however, it approximates a notion of coming into being or freely becoming present, close, alive…*Aruḷ*, for the Siddhântins, is a *śakti*—an active and female aspect of Śiva. Not 'grace' but 'emergent presence.' It, or she,

[51] G.U. Pope, *The Tiruvāçagam or 'Sacred Utterances' of the Tamil Poet, Saint and Sage Māṇikka-vāçagar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900); G. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through Tamil Literature I—Through the Tiruvaachakam* (Delhi: Delhi Tamil Sangam, 1971).

[52] See, for instance, V.A. Devasenathapathy, *Śaiva Siddhānta as Expounded in the Śivajnāna-Siddhiyar and its Six Commentaries* (Madras: University of Madras, 1966); H.R. Hoisington, *Śiva Gnāna Pōtham of Sri Meykanda Deva* (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Adhinam, 1979); Gordon Matthews, *Śiva-Nāna-Bōdham: A Manual of Śaiva Religious Doctrine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948); and Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*. The fourteen principal Siddhāntin texts are: *Śivajñāṉapota*, *Śivajñāṉacittiyār*, *Irupavirupatu*, *Tiruvuntiyār*, *Tirukkaliṟṟuppaṭiār*, *Uṇaiviḷakka*, *Koṭikkavi*, *Neñjuviṭutūtu*, *Poṟṟipaḥṟoṭai*, *Saṅkaṟpanirākaraṇam*, *Śivaprakāśam*, *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ*, *Uṇmaineṟiviḷakkam*, and *Viṉāveṇpā*.

> is dynamic and oriented toward freedom…an experiential process of *full*, unconstricted potentiality.[53]

While I agree with this analysis, the lingering question is how one might use 'emergent presence' in the context of a poem. There might be an occasion when such a translation would fit; but I argue that if used regularly, it would diminish the poetry of the primary source.

In his summation of the fourteen principal Tamil Siddhāntin texts, H. W. Schomerus points out, as do Shulman and Handelman above, that the authors argue that *aruḷ* is Śiva's *śakti*. For the Siddhāntins, *śakti* is itself a unity, but based on its functions, it is superficially divided into three categories: *icchāśakti*, *kriyāśakti*, and *jñānaśakti*. They understood Śiva to be pure intelligence and his *śakti* to be pure energy. Thus, each of the three categories indicates various amounts of each element or substance. For instance, *kriyāśakti* denotes some intelligence, but more energy. It is from this that the worlds are created; *icchāśakti* represents energy and intelligence in equal parts. The function of *icchāśakti* is the gracious love for souls; and *jñānaśakti*, the most beneficial for souls, represents some energy, but mostly intelligence. Through *jñānaśakti* does Śiva recognize the means for saving souls. *Aruḷ* fits into this paradigm as a gloss for *jñānaśakti*, otherwise labeled *aruḷśakti* (because it is for the benefit of souls).[54]

While this is neither the place for a larger discussion of Schomerus' analysis nor for the intricacies of Siddhāntin thought, for that matter, what strikes me is the way in which *aruḷ* is used in relation to *śakti*. In the compound *aruḷ-śakti*, we find an interesting hurdle to jump regarding translation— *śakti-śakti*? The obvious answer would be that

[53] Don Handelman and David Shulman, *Śiva in the Forest of Pines*, pp. 40-1.
[54] H.W. Schomerus, *Śaiva Siddhānta: An Indian School of Mystical Thought*, trans. Mary Law (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000 reprint; originally published in 1912 under the title *Der Śaiv Siddhānta*), pp. 60-62.

since *aruḷ-śakti* is a gloss for *jñāna-śakti*, *aruḷ* would translate as *jñāna*, as 'intelligence,' which is different than its other designation as 'pure energy.' What is also noticeable is the mingling of Tamil and Sanskrit technical terminology. I say this only to suggest that perhaps there are subtle conceptual differences between the two terms. In the study of Tamil Śaivism, then, it is important to locate the term *aruḷ* within literary history so that this regional variant of the pan-Indian Śaiva tradition may be better engaged.

§ 4. MOTIVATION FOR AND LAYOUT OF THIS PROJECT

The idea for this project came to me in 2002 after I had been studying the language of the *Tiruvācakam* for about a year. While translating I noticed the frequency with which Māṇikkavācakar used the term *aruḷ*; it colored almost every page of the text. In curiosity I conducted a word count of an earlier Śaiva bhakti text, the *Tēvāram* (ca. 6th –7th centuries CE), to determine if the three authors of that text used the term as frequently. It was clear that, in proportion to the number of lines in each text, Māṇikkavācakar (ca. mid-9th century) employed the term more often than his predecessors.[55] I reached several possible conclusions: in the two to three centuries between the composition of the *Tēvāram* and when Māṇikkavācakar lived the conceptual parameters of Tamil Śaiva devotionalism had become more sophisticated; or perhaps, Māṇikkavācakar's style of composition and his intellectual tendencies innately directed him to explore the contours of the concept more frequently.

In researching the issue further, I was surprised to discover that little study had been conducted on *aruḷ*'s theological development. I found several discussions of the concept but these were largely concerned with the later Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta

[55] Tiruñāṉacampantar used *aruḷ* approximately 447 times in the 16,880 lines that comprise the first three books of the *Tirumuṟai*; and Cuntaramūrtti used *aruḷ* in approximately 163 instances in the 4,200 lines of the 7th book of the Tamil Śaiva canon. These numbers pale in comparison to Māṇikkavācakar's usage (approximately 365 times) in the 3,327 lines of the *Tiruvācakam*.

theology.[56] This is understandable, perhaps, because the Siddhāntin writings are far more systematized than those of the *nāyaṉmār*: there are medieval commentaries, at least. The Śaiva hymns or poems not only lack medieval commentaries, but also, given the nature of the genre, prove more difficult to interpret systematically. In the secondary literature that expounded on *aruḷ*, I found myself curious about the term's cultural and semantic development, something that was largely missing in the discussions. I chose to undertake this project to fill that gap.

I have arranged the dissertation in two parts: the first is concerned with a selection of poems from four of the eight *caṅkam* anthologies. It is in the eight anthologies that *aruḷ* first appears. This part of the dissertation lays the foundation for the second part of the dissertation where the analysis turns to Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*.

Chapter one analyzes how *aruḷ* operates in amorous relationships. As I mentioned above, *caṅkam* literature is divided into two genres: *akam* ("interior," *i.e.* love) and *puṟam* ("exterior," *i.e.* politics, kingship, etc). This chapter is solely concerned with a collection of poems from the *akam* genre. I work with poems from three anthologies: *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, *Kuṟuntokai*, and *Akanāṉūṟu*. It is believed that each of these texts can be dated between second and third centuries of the Common Era.

In my analysis, I attempt to piece together how the poets understood *aruḷ* to function in love relationships. *Aruḷ* signifies several different but related emotions and activities. In *akam* poetry, the underlying significance of *aruḷ* is intimate affection. This is important because the relationship that Śiva has with a Śaiva *bhakta* is described as

[56] See Mariausuai Dhavamony, *op. cit.*; V. A. Devasenapathi, *Śaiva Siddhānta as Expounded in the Śivajnāna-Siddiyar and its Six Commentaries*; Gordon Mathews, trans., *Śiva-Nāna-Bōdham: A Manual of Śaiva Religious Doctine*; J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *Śivagnana Botham of Meikanda Deva* (Madras: South Indian Śaiva Siddhānta Works Publishing Society, 1984); H. W. Schomerus, *Śaiva Siddhānta*; T. B. Siddalingaiah, *Origin and Development of Śaiva Siddhānta Upto 14th Century* (Madurai: Napolean Press, 1979).

loving: mutual intimacy and love are the bedrock of their spiritual life; and the Śaiva poets also commonly employed imagery from these works to provide deeper emotion to their compostions because the literary conventions must have been well known to their audience.

In chapter two, the investigation turns to *puṟam* poetry and analyzes *aruḷ* in relation to notions of the archetypal *caṅkam* king. For this analysis, I present translations from the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the classical Tamil text of heroic poetry. I look at the ways in which *aruḷ* functions as a part of the royal vocabulary. There is somewhat of an overlap between the term's usage in the *akam* anthologies and the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*; however, as one may imagine, there are significant differences as well because kingship is the issue in *puṟam* poetry. In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, it seems that *aruḷ* signified a benevolent state of awareness that the king was to actualize when ruling and in his personal life (the latter context shows allegiance to the *akam* works). If a king had actualized *aruḷ*, its presence would manifest in his generosity, for instance, or mercy. *Aruḷ* was a crucial element in how the poets believed a king should relate to them. If he lacked *aruḷ*, then they would sing of his treachery; if he possessed it, though few did, they would sing of his glory. What is of interest here (and in the *akam* anthologies) is that *aruḷ* was cultivated and attained; it was not inherent in kingship.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, there is a structural and conceptual parallel between classical Tamil heroic poetry and the later Śaiva *bhakti* poems. Thus, analyzing how *aruḷ* assists in the creation of the archetypal *caṅkam* ruler is instructive in understanding how Śiva is represented in the later *bhakti* tradition. One common element that is significant in both genres of *caṅkam* poetry is that *aruḷ* is absent in the lives of the narrators. They long for it because *aruḷ* will alter their lives in positive ways. Structurally, this is similar to the Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*. His hymns were one

means by which he hoped to receive Śiva's *aruḷ*. Thus, in his hymns he has yet to receive it fully and longs for it. If he had received it, then there would have been no need to compose the hymns.

Following the section on the *caṅkam* poetry, we turn to Śaiva literature, particularly Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*. As a means to introduce the author and the text, I provide an introductory chapter that covers his hagiography, his dates, the structure of the text, and I offer a glimpse at the relationship between Śaiva literature and classical Tamil poetry.

Chapter three investigates how Māṇikkavācakar understood the effects *aruḷ* would have on him as a devotee. As I mentioned above, *aruḷ* is absent in his life; yet he provides an image of the concept as it participates in his worship (*i.e.* ecstatic worship; frenzied dancing and singing) and the effects it has on his cognitive functions (*i.e.* the inability to speak; laughing and crying at the same time). I also argue that the structure of some of his hymns provides a space for ecstatic worship to be demonstrated. Not only was participating in *aruḷ* central to the *bhaktas* mode of worship, it also appears in the formation of Māṇikkavācakar's hymns. The second part of this chapter deals with the absence of *aruḷ*, namely ignorance. I argue that one can read Māṇikkavācakar's list of his transgressions—falling prey to temptation—didactically. In other words, as Māṇikkavācakar laments not being a recipient of Śiva's *aruḷ* and describes his inability to control his desire, he also outlines the effects that ignorance has on the soul. I also argue that in reading Māṇikkavācakar's inability to control his desire for women, we may be witnessing an imitation of Śiva's erotic nature as it appears in mythology. It is difficult to account for the poet's lapses after his induction onto the Śaiva path, and particularly with something as fundamental as controlling desire and temptations of the flesh. The

evidence for the latter argument stems solely from the *Tiruvācakam* and is difficult to corroborate; however, it might explain Māṇikkavācakar's erratic behavior.

Chapter four has two different sections. The first is a grammatical analysis of nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* in the *Tiruvācakam*. This chapter documents how the semantics of the term widened from the vocabularies of kingship and love to the Śaiva religious vocabulary. Nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* are used in ways previously unaccounted for in *caṅkam* poetry. There is an expansion of its use that, on the one hand, was an attempt to infuse the language of the text with a divine glow; and, on the other, was a means to describe all that Śiva undertakes as beneficial for souls. In the second part of this chapter, I deviate a bit from the larger project and explore the question of translation. I look at G. U. Pope's tendency to translate *aruḷ* in every context as 'grace.' I gather evidence to explain why Pope chose to translate in this way. This also provides insight into the project of translation as a whole. As I argued above, using the term 'grace' in translation has the tendency to equate Tamil Śaiva theology with Christian notions of divine activity; however, this is less of a problem than using a single translation for the term. In his translation of a portion of the *Tēvāram*, David Shulman avoids using 'grace,' and instead, uses 'mercy' in each instance that *aruḷ* appears. While 'mercy' does not have the same Christian theological considerations, in my opinion, it does not fully convey the Śaiva theological significance of the term.

In the final chapter, I pull all of the elements together and offer a conclusion. I sift through the evidence presented throughout the dissertation to provide insight into why the Śaiva authors chose this particular term to convey Śiva's fundamental principle. I argue that the theological foundations are indeed present in the *caṅkam* anthologies. I also look at how Māṇikkavācakar understood the principle and conclude that his understanding of *aruḷ* is not as clear as one would hope; however, he provides a space

wide enough for the inclusion of anything associated with Śiva. This differs from the later Tamil Siddhāntin systematization of the term, but Māṇikkavācakar was not interested in systematizing the philosophical and theological nuances of *aruḷ*: he was interested in the release of his soul from the cycle of rebirth.

Let us now turn to the *caṅkam* anthologies. It is important to keep in mind that the earliest theological foundations of the concept *aruḷ* appear in this collection. When we turn to the Śaiva literature in the second part of the dissertation, we will have insight not only into the cultural significance of the term, but also understand the innovation of authors such as Māṇikkavācakar and the desire to create a branch of Śaivism that was unique to Tamilnadu.

PART ONE—REVEALING GRACE: *ARUḶ*'S DEBUT IN TAMIL LITERATURE

The *caṅkam* or classical Tamil poetry is the most ancient literature in a Dravidian language. Exactly when the eight anthologies (*Eṭṭu-t-tokai*) of *caṅkam* poetry were composed is unclear.[57] The current scholarly consensus places the composition of the works between 100 BCE and 450 CE. It has been suggested that the poetry was possibly compiled into anthology form as late as the 8th century of the Common Era.[58] Unfortunately, the only means scholars have of compiling an image of society during this period is through these anthologies. There is a dearth of archeological remains and no reliable inscriptions from the period.[59] As we read through the corpus, then, we must remind ourselves that, in a very real sense, our understanding is bound by the desires and constraints of the poets.

§ 1. *CAṄKAM* GENRES

Caṅkam poetry is rich with imagery, echoing emotions of lived reality. Martha Ann Selby describes the poetry as hovering in a liminal space between memory and dream. "In terms of memory," she writes, "the poem is a structured reexperiencing of a past event in terms of present environments; as a dream, it is reality reworked and revised."[60] The *Tolkāppiyam*, the ancient work on Tamil poetics and grammar, which is

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[57] The eight anthologies are the *Netuṇtokai*, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Naṟṟinai*, *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, *Aiṅkuṟuṉūṟu*, *Patiṟṟupattu*, *Nuṟṟaimpaṭu Kali*, and *Elupatu Paṟipatal*.

[58] For a discussion on the specifics of the eight anthologies, see John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies: a Study in Early Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1985), Ch. 1.

[59] K. V. Zvelebil does mention the existence of 76 stone inscriptions; but the messages are short and often illegible. They do, however, mention the names of some of the chieftains and kings that appear in the *caṅkam* anthologies. Thus, these inscriptions do provide a historicity to the collection. See *Tamil Literature*, p. 44.

[60] Martha Ann Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night*, p. 52.

sometimes referred to as the ninth anthology, divides the poetry into two genres: *akam* and *puṟam*. Their basic nominal meanings are antonyms. *Akam* literally means "interior;" *puṟam* means "exterior." As a genre of poetry, *akam* speaks of the heart, of lovers and the household, of private space. *Puṟam* poetry, on the other hand, tells of public space, of war and death, and of the actions of kings.

While there is a division between these two genres, as I will show in the following two chapters, these categories are somewhat superficial. Elements from one genre may appear in another; this overlap creates a poetic world that reflects a lived world, for love and politics are not mutually exclusive. I will discuss the poetics of each genre as they relate to the content in the following two chapters. Since I am speaking of each genre independently from the other, it is important to elaborate briefly on the overlap of the genres.

§ 2. OVERLAPPING GENRES

The division between *caṅkam* genres is not at all rigid—similar elements, whether imagery, characters, or themes often populate poems from both genres. As Martha Ann Selby states, "In fact, to use the word 'genre' is a bit misleading. I prefer to visualize *akam* and *puṟam* as two parallel systems with components that often intersect. These intersections blur, and at times poets appear to erase any lines between them."[61] This statement widens the *Tolkāppiyam's* suggestion on the relationship between the two genres, namely that they should be viewed as interdependent and complementary.[62] This *akam* poem by Paraṇar is a good example of the overlapping genres.

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[61] Martha Ann Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night*, p. 47.

[62] S. Illakkuvanār trans., *Tolkāppiyam* (Madurai: Kural Neri Publishing House, 1963), specifically part 2, chap. 3.

What Her Friend Said
to her, within the lover's hearing

The days when that man
Has held you close, making
your garland of mixed flowers
fade: they are very few.
But the gossip!
It is louder than the din of victory
On the battlefield of *vākaippaṟantali*,
With its hen-owls
On that day when *Atikaṉ*, the general
Of the tender—jewelled *Pāṇṭiyās*,
Fell,with his elephants,
To the bright-sworded *Koṅkars*.[63]
(Kuṟuntokai 393)

The narrator opens the verse lamenting the short-lived love affair between the heroine and her beloved, Makiḻnaṉ. The image of the lover embracing the garland of mixed flowers insinuates a previous sexual union. This illustration suggests the interior life of the *akam* genre, the life of love. Following the fifth line, however, there is a transition to *puṟam* elements. The 'gossip' removes the sexual union from the private world and thrusts the act into the public gaze. Once in the public arena, images of battle and death unfold—both of which are common elements in *puṟam* poetry. The overlapping elements provide an emotive richness to the poetry because the moods associated with each genre are mingled.

Although there is an extensive overlap between the two genres, one important difference that exists is that *puṟam* poetry is much more concerned with the designation of specific places and people than are the *akam* poems. The latter uses landscape as a means to evoke *uri* (emotional elements) and to characterize types of people, not historical individuals; the *puṟam* approach to composition was due in part to the poets'

[63] Translation by Dr. M. Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuṟuntokai: an Anthology of Classical Tamil Love Poetry* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976), p. 95.

reliance on patronage from the kings and chieftains. Many of the *puṟam* poems celebrate the deeds and glory of the Cōḻa, Cera or Paṇṭiya kings.[64] In some instances, however, *akam* poetry does refer to *puṟam* kings and chieftains.[65]

§ 3. DATING THE *CAṄKAM* ANTHOLOGIES

As I mentioned above, dating the eight *caṅkam* anthologies is problematic. There has been a nationalist tendency to date the texts quite early as a means to give Tamil literature greater antiquity. Such enthusiasm was intended to demonstrate that Tamils were not only the world's oldest population, but also that the beginning of their literature dated back to 10,000 BCE.[66] This date, of course, lacks any historicity and is based solely on ideological grounds. While this nationalist tendency permeated (and still permeates) the ranks in the Tamil academy, more sober, realistic dates have been proposed by various scholars.

One problem with dating the anthologies is, as Zvelebil indicates, that scholars often fail to recognize stages in the life of a text. In other words, the texts have been examined as homogenous, not accounting for original composition, later additions, and their placement in anthology format.[67] For the *akam* texts under consideration in chapter one, Zvelebil offers the most sober dates: *Kuṟuntokai* (100-250 CE); *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* (180-250 CE); and *Akanāṉūṟu* (150-300 CE). For the *puṟam* text, the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, under consideration in chapter two, Zvelebil places its composition between 100 BCE and 300 CE.[68]

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[64] For a historical view on these three major kingdoms, see K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, ch. 7.
[65] S. Ilakkuvanār, *op. cit*., pp. 161-162.
[66] K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, p. 45.
[67] K. V. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 24.
[68] K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, pp. 78-79.

The *Kuṟuntokai* can be translated as the "Short Collection," referring to the length of verse, not the length of the text; it is also translated as the "Collection of Short [poems]." There are 401 poems ranging from four to eight lines, although two poems have nine lines. The compositions are ascribed to 205 poets. The *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* can be translated as the "Short Five Hundred." The five hundred poems are grouped under five poetic moods that correspond to a particular landscape (*tiṇai*), with 100 poems cataloged in each. The poems range from three to six lines and are ascribed to five authors, each of whom composed one collection of poems grouped under a particular mood. The poems in the *Akanāṉūṟu* are longer than those in either of the two anthologies mentioned above; there are also more Sanskrit loan words in this anthology than in either the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* and *Kuṟuntokai*. The length of poems ranges from thirteen to thirty-one lines and are ascribed to 145 poets. *Akanāṉūṟu* can be translated as "Four Hundred *Akam* [poems]."

The *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the text on *puṟam* themes (politics, war, death, patronage), can be translated as the "Four Hundred *Puṟam* [poems]." The text has often been described as the most historically significant because the poems refer to historical figures. It is believed that these kings and chieftains hailed from one of the three major political regions of the time: Cēra, Cōḻa, and Pāṇṭiyaṉ. In the redaction of the text, editors arranged the poems according to theme and subject: kings, chieftains, and anonymous heroes.[69] This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

[69] *Ibid.,* pp. 89-92.

Chapter One:
The Poetics of Love and Separation—*Aruḷ* in the *Akam* Anthologies

In this chapter, I have pieced together a collection of poems from the classical Tamil anthologies on love. The *Tolkāppiyam*, the treatises on the linguistics and poetics of classical Tamil, groups the poems expressing some facet of love, whether pining, union, sulking, quarreling, or separation, under the term *akam*.[70] The central issue here is to understand the place of *aruḷ* alongside other words in the vocabulary of human emotion. *Aruḷ* is quite dynamic in this genre, indicating a variety of feelings and dispositions. Generally speaking, the term is used in several ways: it may signify 'duty,' 'affection,' or 'sexual favor' (with the emphasis on favor). These definitions are not mutually exclusive, as duty may imply sexual favor and vice versa; and affection is ideally present in a relationship. As we move through the poetry below, it will become apparent that these are not the only translations. The nuances of the term are varied and complex, which makes translating the term challenging.

However, developing an awareness of how *aruḷ* functions in the *akam* genre provides insight into the emotional contours of the term in the *Tiruvācakam* and other Śaiva *bhakti* literature. In other words, *aruḷ* plays a significant role in personal relationships, whether those relationships are between humans or between a human and god. Māṇikkavācakar was intent on developing a personal, intimate relationship with Śiva. Much like the characters in the poems below, he asks Śiva to give him *aruḷ*. There are, of course, underlying theological currents in Māṇikkavācakar's request that are not present in the *akam* poems; but what remains is the desire to have Śiva's love and affection.

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[70] V. Murugan, *Tolkāppiyam in English*, p. 373-396.

It is also important to understand how *aruḷ* functions in the *akam* context to gain a better understanding of how it operates in the *puṟam* text, the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, which is the subject of the following chapter. As we will see, in *puṟam* poetry *aruḷ* was a part of the Tamil royal vocabulary. It was used to indicate, among other things, an empathetic state of awareness that the king should actualize when interacting with his subjects, most notably with the bards who were dependent on his good graces for survival. If a king possessed *aruḷ*, this meant for the most part that he had forged an intimacy with the bard based on the singer's talents and lyricism. The king's *aruḷ* would then manifest through gifting.

In *akam* poetry, the situation is somewhat different. The issue of kingship is not the central concern. In saying this, I am not proposing that the concept bears little or no semantic continuity between the two sets of vocabulary. In both, the concept is based on a fundamental selfless concern and empathy. However, in the *akam* genre, *aruḷ*'s semantic range seems more dynamic because the *puṟam* hierarchy, with the king necessarily at the pinnacle, is absent. While there are social and relational hierarchies present in the love poetry, they tend to be a bit more flexible as actors move up and down the rungs or switch positions. Whereas one may assume, based on the time period, that men always played the dominant role, this was not necessarily the case, for behind closed doors do hierarchies often crumble. Thus, we enter a world where the language is rich with double meaning and innuendo as sexual politics are played out across a variety of moodscapes and themes; and in this sampling of poetry, *aruḷ* becomes extremely versatile as it attempts to frame the paradigmatic love relationship.

In this regard, technical terminology, such as we will see with the royal vocabulary of Tamil kingship, has little place in love poetry. One's role in a relationship is not as strictly defined as is the role of king when ruling. Relationships are organic;

they have varied lives and are prone to drastic change. In a few of the cases cited below, for instance, a husband may have a mistress or may frequent a *parattai* (‘another woman’). The relationship with his wife is typically different than his relationship with the *parattai*, though not always; and the nature of the relationships may be perceived differently by each of the actors involved. But the fundamental struggle in this situation is winning the lover’s *aruḷ*. It is precisely this ambiguity that provides the richness to the imagery and language. It provides certain semantic latitude to the language because double entendre, sarcasm, paradox, innuendo, metaphor, and allegory are often used in response to emotionally ambiguous situations.

Although *aruḷ* came to acquire a technical sense in *bhakti* poetry, it still played a role in the emotional relationship between the devotee and Śiva. Māṇikkavācakar, for instance, was prone to assume that his relationship with Śiva had deteriorated, and maniacally questioned why Śiva never paid him any attention. Māṇikkavācakar would then beg for Śiva’s *aruḷ*. Structurally, and perhaps emotionally, this scenario is predominant in the *akam* poems here: the lover’s *aruḷ* is absent and greatly desired. Its absence creates a space for sorrow, self-loathing, and fear—emotions that Māṇikkavācakar experienced frequently.

Before turning to the poems under consideration, it is important to discuss the poetics of the *akam* genre. The poetics are complex, but when they are understood a rich world of emotion is visible behind the metaphors, similes, allegories, and innuendos. This discussion will provide the necessary tools to read the poetry properly.

§ 1. *AKAM* POETICS

Akam poetry has been described as 'erotic' poetry;[71] and indeed erotic elements exist within the anthologies, as sex is an element of amorous relationships. I disagree, however, with this overarching categorization, if 'erotic' is used to emphasize sex as the defining characteristic of the works. The attitude regarding *akam* poetry a little more than a century ago, however, was far more conservative. Martha Ann Selby documents the reception that the collections received upon publication. The *caṅkam* anthologies had been "lost" and were "discovered" by U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar in the late 19th century. He composed commentaries on the texts, ultimately publishing them amidst an uproar over the "pornographic" depictions of women. Selby indicates that one reason for this was that Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva *paṇḍits* established a "textual hierarchy," determining which texts were morally appropriate for study and translation; the *akam* anthologies were deemed inappropriate. It was not until after Independence, in the midst of the Tamil nationalist movement, that *caṅkam* poetry finally received its due attention.[72]

Despite these initial conservative reactions, sex, it seems, is not the center piece of the poetry. Sex is indeed an element present, but much of the poetry deals either implicitly or explicitly with separation more so than with sex. Martha Ann Selby reached a similar conclusion regarding the theme of separation. She writes, "out of the 1,859 [*akam*] poems, 1,137 have been identified as belonging to the landscape of separation…I suggest that perhaps this marked obsession in the realm of literature has to do more with the acuity of human experience in the realms of power and dominance and their curious ties with ambiguity than it has to do with love or lust."[73] I agree with this astute

[71] K.V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, p. 80.
[72] Martha Ann Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night*, pp. 58-61.
[73] *Ibid*., p. 17

observation, as varying degrees of separation pervade most of *akam* poetry. Moreover, there are no overt depictions of sexual acts, only references and innuendo; and these tactics speak less about the feelings of the physical act of lovemaking and more about the realms of human emotion. In a sense, sex does provide a framework for the poems, as it is a way of demonstrating or not demonstrating love; but this does not justify the collection as being described as erotic. Perhaps this body of work has been described as such because, comparatively speaking, there is little within Tamil literature that broaches this human issue with equal richness and beauty as does *akam* poety.

The recipe that the *Tolkāppiyam* gives for an *akam* poem has three main ingredients: *mutal* (the "first things;" *i.e*., time and space), *karu* (the native elements), and *uri* (the human feelings as situated in *mutal* and *karu*).[74] As a poet's basic tools, these elements are woven together to reflect a nuanced poetic world of human sentiment. Within the genre, space and time are divided into five sub-groups that correspond to a manifestation of *uri*. One of the more interesting and evocative spatial components of *akam* poetry is *tiṇai*. A literal translation of the term could be "landscape," "situation," or "location." Poetically, these glosses are superficial because elements from five different landscapes (*tiṇai*) function allegorically, reflecting the particular emotion evoked in the piece.

I take liberty with *tiṇai*'s translation and gloss it as "moodscape" because the emotional mood is elicited by time and the flora, fauna, and topography of a region: hill tracts (*kuriñci*), pastoral tracts (*mullai*), agricultural tracts (*marutam*), seashore tracts (*neytal*), and wasteland tracts (*pālai*); and each region corresponds to a particular human emotion. For instance, a poem set in the *tiṇai* of *kuriñci* expresses the mood of love-in-

[74] S. Ilakkuvanār, trans. *Tholkāppiyam*, pp. 153-162.

union. The remaining four moodscapes are: *mullai*/ patient waiting for lover's return; *marutam*/ sulking or quarreling; *neytal*/ anxious waiting for the lover's return; and *pālai*/ separation. Each *akam* poem is catalogued under one of these five landscapes, and the imagery of each functions symbolically to indicate to the audience the appropriate mood. However, not every *akam* poem has descriptions of the flora or fauna, but many do; and all of the pieces are catalogued under one of the five moods, whether they have contain descriptions of a region or not.

There is a temporal setting for each of the five *tiṇai*—night (*kuriñci*), late evening (*mullai*), nightfall (*neytal*), midday (*pālai*), and morning (*marutam*). In the mood of *kuṟiñci*, the mood of lover's union, for instance, night is the setting because the encounters written about were clandestine, between unmarried couples. The coolness of the night on the verdant hillside provides the perfect locale for the tryst. Consider, too, the *tiṇai* of *pālai*, conveying the mood of separation—midday is the temporal setting because the harsh sun and oppressive heat mirror the anguish suffered in separation from one's lover or spouse. These landscapes and temporal settings are also present in *puṟam* poetry, but they express different themes. For instance, *veṭci*(corresponding to *kuṟiñci*) suggests a prelude to war or cattle-lifting; *vañci* (*mullai*) expresses preparation for war or invasion; *uḻñai* (*marutam*) expresses a siege; *tumpai* (*neytal*), a battle; and *vākai* (*pālai*) evokes the ideals and consequences of achievement and victory. As will be discussed in the following chapter, these *tiṇais* are given in the *Tolkāppiyam* but do not reflect or agree with the actual settings in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*.[75]

Like the natural world, each *tiṇai* is populated with unique flora and fauna, types of water, and particular people inhabiting those tracts of land. All of these elements

[75] George Hart and Hank Heifetz, *The Puṟanāṉūṟu*, p. xxix.

assist in evoking the mood of the poem. While the following chart is not exhaustive, it demonstrates well, I think, the information needed to read an *akam* poem:[76]

	Lover's Union	Patient Waiting	Unfaithfulness, Sulking	Anxiety/ Separation	Hardship, Separation
Characteristic flower (name of region and mood)	*Kuṟinci*	Mullai	Marutam	Neytal	*Pālai*
Landscape	Mountains	Forest, pasture	Countryside	Seashore	Wasteland
Time	Night	Late evening	Morning	Nightfall	Midday
Season	Cold season/early frost	Rainy season	All seasons	All seasons	Late frost, summer
Bird	Peacock, parrot	Sparrow, hen	Stork, heron	Seagull	Dove, eagle
Beast	Monkey, elephant,	Deer	Buffalo, fresh water fish	Crocodile, shark	Fatigued elephant, tiger, or wolf
Tree or plant	Jackfruit, bamboo	Cassia (*koṉṟai*)	Mango	Laurel (*puṉṉai*)	Cactus, drumstick, mango
Water	Waterfall	Rivers	Pools	Wells, sea	Waterless wells, stagnant water
Occupation and people	Hill tribes guarding millet; harvest; gathering honey	Ploughman	Pastoral occupation	Selling fish and salt; fisherfolk	Wayfarers and bandits

Table 1: *Akam* Poetics

As we shall see below, these categories are not always strict. Elements from one *tiṇai* may appear in a poem cataloged under a different *tiṇai*, giving a complex, emotive spin to the work. A poem may be set in the hillside *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci*, for instance, but occurs in midday (*pālai*); such a scenario evokes the feelings of union and separation. As readers, then, we are forced to confront emotional worlds where feelings are not

[76] I adapted this chart from the one found in A. K. Ramanujun, *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classial Tamil Anthology*, reprint (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 107.

discrete—emotions are woven together to closely resemble the actual world of human feeling.

While *mutal*, *karu*, and *uri* provide the framework for Classical Tamil poetry, they also provide what the *Tolkāppiyam* refers to as *uḷḷuṟai-y-uvamam* in *akam* poetry. The *Tolkāppiyam* states, "'*uḷḷurai uvamam*' is that which is understood by inference from the simile given in the text."[77] *Uḷḷurai-y-uvamam* is not a simile in the proper sense because explicit markers of comparison, such as 'like' or 'as,' are usually absent. This exclusion increases the nuances that may be construed from a particular passage. It is best to think of *uḷḷuṟai-y- uvamam* as an allegory. To get an idea of how all of these elements work together, consider this poem by Kapilar:

> The summer wind becomes flute music
> through the glistening holes of swaying bamboo;
> the music of the cold falling water
> is like a drum in a thicket of bamboo;
> the urgent voices of a herd of stags 5
> will sound like an oboe.
> On the slopes of mountain flowers where
> bees have become lutes,
> having heard the sweet sounding music,
> an assembly of female monkeys 10
> grows excited.
> They are bewildered to see
> a peacock on the bamboo hill,
> like a dancer's entrance on a stage.
> He had a beautiful, strong bow 15
> and an arrow chosen.
> He inquired about which path
> the elephant he was fighting took.
> He stood with a flowering garland on his chest
> on one side of a millet field. 20
> Many saw him there.
> Friend, why am I the one who lies

[77] S. Ilakkuvanār, *op. cit*. p. 160.

on my bed in the difficult darkness
with tears flowing from my eyes
and shoulders growing thin? 25

(*Akanāṉūṟu* 82)

If we return to the chart above, we can begin organizing the various components within the poem. The prominent elements are: the mountain slope, the waterfall, the bamboo, female monkeys, a peacock, and an elephant. All of these falls under the category of *kuṟinci*, indicating the poem's mood is love-in-union; however, there are other elements that do not fall under this category: the season is summer, not the cold season or early frost. This indicates the mood of *pālai* or separation; a herd of stags also populates the mountain slope. Stags or deer are typically found in *mullai* or patient waiting. Combined, all of these elements create a moodscape that reflects well the emotions of lived experience, for nothing exists in a vacuum. Furthermore, if we pay attention to the narrative we will notice that, while the mood is love-in-union, the situation is more complex than that. The image in the last four lines of the poem does not reflect the joyous feeling of love-in-union.

As the flora and fauna indicate, this poem is set in the mood of *kuṟiñci* and demonstrates well how *uḷḷuṟai-y-uvamam* functions. A young woman is describing to a friend the emotional impact of being separated from her lover. We know that the woman and the man chasing the elephant have had a sexual encounter, as the *tiṇai* tells us so. In the first fifteen lines of the poem, Kapilar provides a lush description of the hillside where the flora and fauna are in such harmony that the author describes all the elements as if they were in a music ensemble. Following this initial image, we are introduced to the peacock that evokes bewilderment in the monkeys. As the description of the terrain ends, the hero seems to emerge *from* the landscape. His body becomes the central image, transferring the audience's focus from the terrain to his physicality. In regard to *uḷḷuṟai-*

y-uvamam, the peacock foreshadows the appearance of the lover. Since the lover occupies the same poetic field as the peacock, this is an allegory: the scene on the hillside is representative of the lover. Therefore, what is in the scene is associated with him.

Martha Ann Selby suggests that *uḷḷuṟai-y-uvamam* is a technique to reconcile the human body's discontinuity with the environment. It was used to impose the poets' desire for continuity onto the natural surroundings. Selby argues that the poem is the place where environment meets body. The natural constituents reflect the self because the mood(s) associated with landscape is responsible for animating everything within that context.[78]

Another element of this poem that makes it all the more creatively complex is the temporal setting. While the mood has been categorized as love-in-union (*kuṟiñci*), it also bears the distinct mark of lovers-in-separation. The last few lines of the poem are candidly that. The image of the tears and withering shoulders set in the 'difficult darkness' all betray the woman's anguish at not being with her lover. In this way, then, she has recast the night—it is no longer a time of joyous union. This is contrasted with the time in which she saw her lover. It was in the day, as he was hunting an elephant and stood on the side of a millet field in plain view of everyone. The time, then, would either be morning or midday, which corresponds to sulking and separation respectively. Since the narrator does not mention the lover's unfaithfulness, it seems that these elements are evoking love-in-separation (*pālai*).

This also begs the question; at what time is she speaking to her friend? It certainly is not night, as the narrator explains her anguish during that time. Again, I

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[78] Martha Ann Selby, "Dialogues of Space, Desire, and Gender in *Caṅkam* Tamil Poetry and Poetics," in *Tamil Geographies: Constructions of Space and Place in South India*, Martha Ann Selby and Indira Peterson, eds. (forthcoming).

would argue for the *pālai* temporal setting. Nonetheless, this mingling of elements provides a richer emotional charge because it evokes both love-in-union and love-in-separation.

One striking element is that, fundamentally, this piece is about separation, but is couched in the *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci*. I do not argue that each poem in the *akam* anthologies concerns separation; but I would argue that many are, despite the *tiṇai*. All of the poems under consideration here certainly evoke pangs of separation, even those set in the mood of union. *Tiṇai*, then, seems to be more of means to gauge the time lapsed since the lovers' last meeting. In the poems below, *tiṇai* gauges the time passed since the lover's *aruḷ* was last given. There is nothing standardized in regard to what each *tiṇai* represents in duration of time; but it becomes clear after reading a selection of poems that *pālai* is on the extreme end, indicating a considerable lapse of time since the last meeting—perhaps weeks or months—and *kuṟiñci*, on the opposite end, is where the meeting occurred only very recently and the feelings from the encounter still dominate the narrator's perspective. The reason I claim that *kuṟiñci* is particularly concerned with separation, more so than union, is that the poems are set subsequent to the tryst; and the narrator is typically recounting the escapade. Frequently, there is an underlying desperation in these works. This anxiety, which the landscape attempts but fails to remove, stems from the uncertainty about whether another tryst can be arranged. Presumably, the narrator would prefer to be basking in her or his lover's *aruḷ*, rather than attempting to recapture the sensations through a monologue, for the intensity can never be quite the same.

Time, then, functions in two different ways in the *akam* works under consideration here. The above poem does a considerable job illustrating how these two distinct notions of time operate. There is the formal setting described above—night,

early evening, etc.; and in this particular poem, the setting seems to be midday. There is also the duration of time spent in separation from the lover. This is an emotional time and quite difficult to measure. In everyday life, for instance, one person may cope with separation from his or her lover or spouse in a completely different way than another. One may experience heartache or anxiety for different lengths of time though the circumstances may be similar. It is difficult, therefore, to assign any specific duration to a particular *tiṇai*, though each seems to designate different stages in separation. The above piece demonstrates an almost palatable pain of separation, even though the meeting more than likely occurred in the recent past, as the flora and fauna reveal.

There is a very universal feel to *akam* poetry because the mood supersedes any historical person or place. The author of the *Tolkāpiyam* writes that no proper names are to be used to characterize the people whose relationships are unfolding in one of the *tiṇai* or landscapes that express mood.[79] Thus, the characters in *akam* poetry tend to be "fictional," not historical individuals as in *puṟam* poetry.[80] Thus, in this world of stock characters, largely devoid of kings and chieftains, where "ordinary" human beings act on their emotions, an element of the universal is present because love, in some form, pervades human experience. One question that continues to emerge is, how do human beings relate with one another in an amorous relationship? For our purposes here, one answer seems to lie in understanding the concept of *aruḷ*.

As I mentioned above, *aruḷ* may indicate a tender, affectionate duty or sexual favor. These are very general interpretations, but they strike at the core of the concept—a loving, selfless disposition. This description, however, is somewhat vague, but conveys, I think, the intensity and connection that selflessness promotes in these relationships. In

[79] S. Ilakkuvanār, trans., *Tholkāppiyam*, pp. 161-162.
[80] See p. 36.

other words, if one had an over-inflated sense of self, neglecting the relationship in favor of fulfilling one's urges outside of the relationship, they would not be possessed of *aruḷ*; on the other hand, if one were to eschew personal fame, wealth, and pleasure for the sake of the emotional health of one's mate, they would be possessed of it.

What is largely at issue here, and plays into creating multiple nuances, is the life expectancy of such a passionate disposition. A lover, for instance, may describe receiving his or her beloved's *aruḷ* through recalling their clandestine tryst on a hillside at midnight; or a wife may lament the absence of her husband's *aruḷ* because he either left on a journey or cavorts with a *parattai* (other woman). These are only two possible scenarios but we are dealing with two emotional contexts here. In the former scenario, experiencing *aruḷ* lasted the duration of the tryst, and the lover typically longs to experience it again. In that context, they are not married, and thus, only experience one another at night, when no one else is present; with the latter scenario, all that the husband had previously committed to providing—emotional and financial support, monogamy—is absent, and the wife either longs for the return of his *aruḷ* (or rejects it, though this is rare). In longing for her husband's *aruḷ*, a wife desires not to be neglected, to be the favored among all other women, and important enough to prevent the husband from leaving for long periods of time.

§ 2. *ARUḶ* IN *AKAM* POETRY

Let us begin with a short poem from the *Kuṟuntokai* lamenting a husband's absence:

> Forsaking duty (*aruḷ*) and love (*aṉpu*),
>   deserting his mate,
> he left for wealth. If he is wise,
> let him be *so* wise.
> Let us women be simple.
>   (*Kuṟuntokai* 20)

Kōpperuñcōḻaṉ set this poem in the *tiṇai* of *pālai* (separation). As I discussed earlier, the use of allegory so typical in *akam* poetry has not been evoked here. The language of the piece, however, indicates the pain of separation. The heroine is speaking to her friend or *tōḻi* after the husband has departed. In placing wealth as the highest goal, the man neglects his partner's emotional world and deserts her. His focus on money over his wife's feelings indicates to her that he is not possessed of love or duty. In her anger at his decisions, she tells her friend that remaining simple or innocent is preferred. What she means here is that it is best not to be so clever, not to devise schemes for acquiring wealth. She speaks disingenuously about his rationale—*uravōr āyiṉ/uravōr uravōr āka* (trans. if he is wise, let him be *so* wise)—as a means to cope with his absence; but beneath her ironic tone, she longs for his return and to experience his duty (*aruḷ*) and love.

In this particular poem, *aruḷ* indicates duty, but it implies devotion, and perhaps, physical intimacy. If the husband had been devoted to his wife, then it is unlikely that he would have left in search of wealth. His *aruḷ* would dictate that he remain by her side, offering her the emotional, physical, and financial support that she needs. What we do not know is whether the suffering of the wife will prompt her to reject his *aruḷ* if and when he returns.

While the definitions of 'duty' and 'sexual favor' may seem incongruous, there can be an ironic overlap. In such instances, translating the term becomes quite difficult because this relation provides different shades of meaning. Often the narrator is implying both. This double meaning displays an underlying tension between sex, power, and domination, because power and domination may manifest physically, through sexual union. I believe this is well demonstrated in the following poem by Ōrampōkiyār:

It is not sweet only for you: for us, too, it is abundant pleasure.
Since you are now intent, wanting
the woman with a beautiful forehead who longs for
    your chest,
stay in that place, you do us no favor (*aruḷātu*) here.
(*Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 46)

This piece is set in the *tiṇai* of *marutam*, the agricultural landscape indicating 'sulking'. The whole of the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* is organized in thematic decads. This particular poem is found in the *Pulavi Pattu* (Decad of Sulking). As we see, the heroine's friend or *tōḻi* responds sarcastically to the wayward husband's return home. She tells him to return to his mistress because he is not doing them any favor (*aruḷātu*). The image is of the *tōḻi* blocking the husband's access to his grieving wife and berating him. P. Jotimuttu explains the man's absence through implicating the emotional fragility of the *parattai*, who would sulk if he were to visit home occasionally.[81] While there are no explicit indicators of the duration of this visit, the sarcastic tone of the piece seems to indicate that he has been away for a considerable period of time—time enough to sour any lingering affection the wife may have harbored. Though the husband has returned, ostensibly for a rapprochement, it is clear, at least from the perspective of the narrator, that the husband has cultivated affection for the woman with the beautiful forehead, be it merely physical or otherwise, and she for him.

The interesting element of this context is the way in which power and domination dialogue across the semantic range of this term. In setting up spaces where he may or may not give his *aruḷ*, the *tōḻi* gains the upper hand in the crisis. U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar's commentary identifies the mistress as a *parattai*.[82] The man's decision to spend time with her, not with his wife, has caused problems for him and her. The *tōḻi* understands

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[81] P. Jotimuttu, trans. *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu, the Short Five Hundred* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1984), p. 179.
[82] U.Vē Cāminātaiyar, *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu.*, p. 25.

this. In demarcating the spaces, and based on her sarcastic tone, she is informing the husband that his sexual career with his wife has just come to a halt. There is an irony here because she is really informing him that he no longer has any authority over their house—he has been relieved of his duty and his sexual rights to his wife.

P. Jotimuttu focuses solely on the irony in the last line of the monologue; however, it really begins in the first line— *ninakkē anru aḥtu emakkum ar initē* (literal trans. "It is not only for you: for us, too, it is abundant pleasure")—and weaves its way through to the end—*īṇṭu nī aruḷātu āṇṭu uṟaitallai* (literal trans. "you stay in that place, without favoring here").[83] The friend sarcastically recites the opening line in reference to the pleasure that the man has had in his sexual escapades. There is no denying the calculated tone here, which betrays the wife's suffering. In telling him to leave without demonstrating his *aruḷ*, she is alluding to the fact that he has been bestowing it on the *parattai*. If we imagine the next scene, we may conjure an image of the husband wandering back to the abode of his mistress.

Martha Ann Selby has suggested that Tamil love poetry negotiates perspectives on power and dominance and their ties to ambiguity more so than it does on love and lust.[84] I agree with this suggestion, particularly as it pertains to understanding how *aruḷ* operates within this genre. The effects of *aruḷ* are far more abstract, bound tighter to emotions here than they are in the royal vocabulary of *puṟam* poetry. The presence or absence of a lover's *aruḷ* will cause emotional worlds to be either stable or anarchic, respectively. In this regard, are we really talking about sex? Probably not, but sex is a very real factor in the arena of power and domination. Since there is a loose hierarchy present, in that one lover (usually the male) gives *aruḷ* to another, the provider has the

[83] P. Jotimuttu, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
[84] Martha Ann Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night*, p. 17.

ability to manipulate the receiver: he may intermittently give it, then take it away; or he may offer it to a third party, which could bring heartache, scandal, and thus, shame onto the neglected lover. Consider, for instance, the following poem by Ammūvaṉār:

> O bard, live long:
> in this village near the grove set on the seashore,
> where the *puṉṉai* trees are replete with buds,
> gossip has emerged as a *result* of his favor (*aruḷumāṟē*) for me.
> (*Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 132)

This poem falls under the *Pāṇaṟku Uraitta Pattu* ("Addressing the Bard Decad"). The reference to the seashore informs us that this poem is set in the *tiṇai* of *neytal* or the seascape, indicating lamentation over an absent lover. The scenario in the decade is that the lover has sent a bard to make excuses for his absence and time spent in the arms of another woman. The husband hopes the bard will convince his wife to forgive him; but here the wife rejoins sarcastically. Based on the narrator's tone and word choice, we can imagine the dialogue between the two. The bard tells the woman that her husband cares for her, loves and supports her; and her sardonic reply is that the gossip in the village is *because* he loves, cares, and supports (*aruḷumāṟē*) her. The scandal broke over his affairs with a *parattai*, and it has now spread everywhere, like buds covering *puṉṉai* trees. The allegory between the gossip and the buds draws us into the imagery, and thus, the mood. It gives us insight to her grief over his actions, which are now headline news.

Much like *Aiṅ*. 46 that we saw above, the woman is distraught that her husband is familiar with another woman. She uses *aruḷ* ironically here to refer to the loving duty that the bard claims her husband possesses, but it seems she also uses it as an underhanded slight to allude to the sexual nature of his relationship with the *parattai*. In addition, she is embarrassed that his time spent away from home has caused such a stir in the village. Despite his scandalous behavior, the lover is still attempting to return home;

and his reentry to that world is incumbent upon the bard persuading his wife and his wife allowing him to return.

In this next poem, we see a slightly different situation. Here, it is not the heroine who has the upper hand in the relationship, but the man. The two are not married but occasionally rendezvous under cover of darkness; and she longs for a standing appointment with him, perhaps even marriage:

> O Lord of this land,
> where a monkey with colorful hair,
> mate of the female monkey, pops rain bubbles
> on a wide rock with a small branch of the *cūral* palm.
> We long for you. Will our tender beauty fade if you
> favor (*aruḷuti*) us?
>
> (*Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 275)

This piece is one in the *Kurakku Pattu* ("Monkey Decad") and is set in the *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci* (hillside), evoking the mood of sexual union. In this poem, *aruḷ* is used to convey the sexual tension and frustration the heroine has with her lover. The allegorical element betrays the fact that he has been avoiding or neglecting her. The monkey (a reference to her lover) popping rain bubbles is obviously engaged in worthless activity. In this ephemeral world, there is little with less longevity than a bubble. Through this allegory and her question at the end of the poem, the heroine inquires about the cause for the infrequency of their meetings; and she seems to conclude that he chooses to engage in activities as meaningless as hitting bubbles with a stick over being with her. Jotimuttu has also suggested that that reference to the rain bubbles is a reference to the heroine's beauty. The lover is dashing it with his infrequent visits, and thus, her charm may fade prematurely, as the bubble does with help from the monkey.[85] Jotimuttu's suggestion is

[85] P. Jotimuttu, *op. cit*., p. 42.

astute and, when both are read together, elucidates well the multivalent nature of *tiṇai*. The element that Jotimuttu does not bring out is that the heroine's beauty is contingent on receiving the man's *aruḷ*. We are, therefore, presented with an intriguing piece of information: *aruḷ*'s effects may be read physically, on the body.

Since *aruḷ* influences the health of the actors' emotional lives, it seems natural that the effects of its presence or absence would manifest on the body. The heroine above has started to question the relationship between the endurance of her beauty and the lover's *aruḷ*; but because the trysts are still occurring, albeit less frequently than she would like, she is not completely deprived of it. Thus, her beauty remains intact for the time being.

As I mentioned above, *aruḷ* is always discussed *in absentia*. Even in poems set in the *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci* (union) it is absent. The poem above is a nice illustration. As typical in *kuṟiñci* poems, the narrator is conveying a message requesting sexual union; and more often than not a tryst has already occurred, and the narrator longs to experience it again. Despite the mood, *aruḷ* is currently absent. The contextual difference between the *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci* on one end and that of *pālai* (separation) on the other is the duration of time since the last meeting. There is an almost palatable excitement in *kuṟiñci* poems, suggesting that the tryst occurred only in the recent past. The chief concern is whether or not another meeting can be secured. The lover is still hopeful that his or her wish will come true. Thus, the tenor of desperation that characterizes much of the *pālai* poems is understandably absent. There is still a sense of angst, though, at *aruḷ* not being experienced in the moment, which leads the actors to acknowledge that it may not be experienced from that particular lover again.

The most frequent and poignant examples of *aruḷ*'s effects on the body occur when a man has not engaged his lover or wife for a considerable period of time. It is

often the case that the bereft then descends into an emotionally tumultuous state and neglects her health. Thus, the body begins to shed weight, becoming in some sense, a wisp of her former self: bangles begin to fall from skeletal wrists, shoulders shrink, and eyelids remain wet; seclusion is a popular tactic in coping with *aruḷ*'s absence, removing the heartsick lover from the public gaze and social embarrassment. The following *pālai* poem from the *Kuṟuntokai* is an illustration of how *aruḷ*'s absence may compromise the biological integrity of the physical form:

> O friend, live long!
> He has journeyed beyond the wasteland void of water,
> where in the summer a dragonfly returns hungry
> having searched with a honeybee in a cluster of flowers
> on the tall, twisted branch of a withered and scorched tree.
> My concern for the uncaring one (*aruḷār*) who left has ended.
> We of attractive, fine hair have suffered,
> our beautiful bangles now loose around our wrists.
> (*Kuṟuntokai* 211)

In the last line of the poem, the author, Paraṇar, calls upon the audience's imagination. There need not be grisly images of emaciated bodies for the poem to be poignant. In fact, minimalism does more in this regard than detail. Here, the author alludes to the physical condition of the heroine and her friend through reference to their bangles—they are loose around their wrists. Obviously, before, the wrists were more robust and healthy; but due to the suffering endured at the man's absence, the grief-stricken women have lost physical mass. The image is poignant, and combined with the allegory it is even more striking. The dragonfly and the honeybee represent the heroine and the friend to whom she is speaking. Although these two creatures have scavenged for food, none is available. The lack of food is indicative of the lack of emotional nourishment. This image plays nicely in underscoring the picture of their diminishing bodies. The two are wasting away as if they were starving. The voluntary absence of the

heroine's lover reveals to her that he does not care for her, he is void of *aruḷ* (*aruḷār*). She and the *tōḻi* languish in his absence, as the dragonfly and honeybee starve, to the point where the heroine recognizes the futility of waiting for his return. They have suffered enough, and her body reveals her emotional state. Thus, she claims no longer to have concern for him.

The *tōḻi*'s empathy for and emotional bond with the *talaivi* is striking. Above, the *tōḻi*'s body displays the same distress as the heroine's body—she, too, languishes in the absence of the lover's *aruḷ*; but what if the *talaivi*'s conclusions regarding her lover are erroneous? Absence does not necessarily make the heart grow fonder, so to speak, but may cause impaired judgment and lead to faulty conclusions. Miscommunication and misperception are characteristics of even the most healthy of relationships; and how would "love" poetry be catalogued if these elements were not a part of the works? In the context of Tamil love poetry, it is absence that typically brings about the above elements. As we saw, the absence of the lover's *aruḷ* caused the physical form to deteriorate; but in the following three poems we are provided with scenarios in which absence takes its toll on the mental health of the actors, affecting perception and judgment. In the following poem, we see the *talaivi* comforting the *tōḻi* because she is distraught over the heroine's predicament.

> Darkness will be torn as lightning flashes,
> when a rain cloud unleashes a downpour at midnight;
> the stars, resembling ants thronging from the opening in the hill,
> have lost their luster like sparks discharged when iron is worked.
> Appearing in that place, the blacksmith, with his large hand,
> scooped an ant nest from the ground.
> They who ponder the flooding river
> tremble from the fear of crocodiles,
> their poles vanishing as the rising water resounds,
>   slapping against the rocks—
> they never say, "we are frightened."

On the mountain slope where *Aṇaṅku* dwells,
the tall bamboo rattles as they brush a passing rain cloud;
a large, ferocious tiger kills a mammoth elephant
to satiate the hunger of the pregnant tigress;
a fearsome cobra, to create light, spits out
a sharp ruby and in its light slowly drags its prey;
the thoughtful fear the small trail thick with stones
because to walk this difficult path is like walking on swords.
He came with a lance for protection, with his heart intent on
pleasure (*aruḷ*).
He is not cruel.
You who are generous have no fault.
O Friend, the fault is on me,
who caused you unlimited, intense misery.
(*Akanāṉūṟu* 72)

The references to the hillside and the midnight setting inform us that this piece is set in the *kuṟiñci* landscape, evoking the mood of union. The elephant, too, conveys the mood of the poem, as elephants are common to the hillside. There are other elements, though, that are not typically *kuṟiñci*, such as the flooding river, the crocodiles, and the rain. Rivers typically mark the landscape of *mullai* (patient waiting); while the crocodile is a common element in *neytal* (lamentation); and the rainy season may be either *mullai*, *neytal*, or *marutam*. Thus, we see a nice overlap of imagery here that enhances the mood and provides insight into the emotional history hinted at in the piece.

In the last four lines of the poem, the heroine is consoling her friend for the undue grief the misperception of her lover has caused. What I take from this scenario is that prior to this monologue, the male had been away, but returned unexpectedly for a tryst ('…with his heart intent on pleasure' [*aruḷ*]). During his absence, however, the heroine grew increasingly distraught at his absence, unduly criticizing his character. The *tōḻi*, who appears in many poems as the empathetic character *par excellence*, suffered heartache along with her friend. The last four lines suggest that prior to the lover's return and the tryst, the heroine's emotional world was tenuous at best, believing her lover was

cruel. The *tōḻi* was also made to suffer, and perhaps, concurred with the heroine's opinion of her lover.

The context reveals how the lack of attention—sexual or otherwise—caused the heroine to descend into depression and sorrow. As the imagery in this poem suggests, emotional worlds can change rather suddenly. Consider, for instance, the first line: *iruḷ kiḻippatu pōl miṉṉi*…(trans. Darkness will be torn as lightning flashes). The sudden illumination of the lightning dispelling darkness is analogous to a sudden shift in disposition, presumably here because the lover indeed returned, dashing the heroine's negative opinion of him.

What the imagery suggests is that the hero was forced to travel a treacherous path to rendezvous with the heroine. The narrator provides imagery of a flooding river with crocodiles that should instill fear in those who travel it, but they continue on as the rising water slaps against the rocks and their poles vanish in the deep. The scene on the hillside, too, is not very inviting, with a ferocious tiger killing a mammoth elephant for his pregnant mate and a cobra dragging its prey. In regard to *uḷḷurai-y-uvamam*, the tiger, it seems, is an allegory for the lover. This scene shows how the lover, in order to satiate the heroine, has overcome a monumental task, much like the tiger killing the elephant. The final image of the difficult path also reveals the hardship that the lover endured on his trek for the rendevouz. The path consists of stones sharp like swords and would deter most from traveling it; however, the lover was not discouraged and continued forward. To show the sincerity of his devotion to her, the heroine explains to her friend that, despite this hardship, her lover arrived with a lance for protection. Thus, he knew that he could have fallen victim to the natural elements or to some other animal in his travels, but came nonetheless.

I place the scenario very shortly after the tryst occurred. The *tōḻi* is still experiencing the emotional turmoil that reigned prior to the lover's return. Since the friend was not privy to the union, her emotional world lags behind that of the heroine. The *tōḻi* is still suffering the pangs of separation and the heroine soothes her in explaining that it was her whose judgement was wrong, no one else's. There is a tenderness in the last lines of the poem as she apologizes for causing her friend such heartache.

The following two poems are both set in the *tiṇai* of *pālai*, evoking the mood of separation. In each situation, the absence of the husband (and his *aruḷ*) has caused the wife to unduly question his character. In the first piece there are descriptions of bodies, but they elicit a different response when compared to those seen previously:

It is said, "a man's effort to seek wealth
is for the sake of duty (*aruḷ*)." Without laziness, with a mind
abounding in strength, in their thoughts wealth is the goal.
A burning anger has spread over you, entering the vast forest
where the trees are charred, life dessicated! 5
where the Maṟavar, who wear anklets and whose strength is like
a conquering tiger,
in the ancient, small village, rest in the shade of the common area.
They follow the long, dry stone path through
the towering mountains that lack water.
You have said that, having thought of excellent beauty, he has gone 10
to women on whose wrists are shining bangles,
and from their coral lips sweet words are uttered; their
thoughts pure;
they of beautiful foreheads and with unlimited love
wear sandalwood on their blossoming breasts, where their
garlands do not touch the space between. 15
In this world alone, is there anyone more beautiful than you,
who can return it, other than the pitiable?
Thus, the *iṅkai* trees grow like black sprouts in the rainy season.
O tiny, soft woman of a high waist,
around which many beads are arranged. 20
Grumbling, you have said many things.
Your anger is unjustified.
How can your man even think of leaving you,

superior in rare qualities?

(*Akanāṉūṟu* 75)

Here, we see that the husband's absence has caused the heroine to grow angry. At the end of the poem, the *tōḻi* points out that she is unjustified in her resentment. While the author, Maturai Pōttanār, spends a considerable amount of energy focusing on the physical particulars of a certain set of women, the initial imagery of the scorched flora evokes the mood quite well. Forests and mountains charred under duress of the summer sun often characterize the separation pregnant within the *pālai* landscape; and, furthermore, to augment the hardship of *pālai*, it should be recalled that forests and mountains are the locale for the moods of *mullai* (patient waiting) and *kuṟiñci* (lovers' union), respectively. A.K. Ramanujan writes that any image from the repertoire of images particular to a landscape has the ability to evoke a specific feeling. This is certainly at work because the audience has, in his words, a live vocabulary: "the actual objective landscapes of Tamil country become the interior landscape of Tamil poetry."[86] In the above context, the *pālai* landscape emerges out of the *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci* and *mullai*, decimated from extreme natural conditions. Thus, not only does the imagery elicit feelings of separation, but also heightens the closure of those bygone days of trysting and patiently waiting. These nuances suggest a very complex feeling because one must journey through those emotions for the hardship in separation to truly resonate.

Further situating the mood's brutality, Pōttanār evokes the Maṟavar, the indigenous tribe of the *pālai* land tract. As we shall see in a poem below, the Maṟavar were perceived as fierce, and perhaps, as Ramanujan has suggested, as thieves.[87] In this particular poem, however, they are in repose; but the mere mention of the name allows us

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[86] A.K. Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape*, pp. 106-108.
[87] *Ibid*., p. 107.

to understand the heroine's plight, which, from the *tōḻi*'s perspective, is at odds with the reality of the situation. The husband has indeed left; however, the motive for this journey is under dispute. The heroine believes that he is enjoying a prolonged visit with nubile women; while the *tōḻi* argues that, no, in fact, he is actually earning money for her support.

The *tōḻi* employs several strategies to pacify the heroine. The *tōḻi* opens with an adage—*aruḷ an̲r̲u āka āḷvin̲ai āṭavar/ poruḷ en̲a…* ("it is said that the object of men's man-effort is for the sake of duty/support (*aruḷ*)). This saying suggests that there may have been some cultural consensus as to the significance of the term. I dare say that this consensus was uniform, though, as there are divergent examples within the *akam* texts. The importance here, however, is it being embedded in an adage: its use in this context indicates that the significance of the term was part of public discourse; so much so that it is a general expression, a proverb in the public domain. The *tōḻi* cites the saying to foreshadow her conclusion that the man has not abandoned her.

The *tōḻi* qualifies the adage with the line—*valitta poruḷal kāṭciyin̲ maintumali uḷḷamoṭu tuñcal cellātu* (literally: "without laziness, with a mind abounding in strength, in thought wealth is the goal"). These words provide an idealistic image of a male's role in both the public and private realms. The term here is associated with money; however, money is the means by which *aruḷ* is actualized. In the negative space is the necessity to work hard and have dedication to what one undertakes. In this way do the principles of *aruḷ* dictate that one be productive in the public world so as to be able to care for the spouse in private. This, the *tōḻi* explains, is why the lover has left—to seek wealth; not to fornicate, as the heroine believes. She emphasizes this in describing how difficult it is to cross the *pālai* tract in search of work—*aṇṇal neṭu varai ām ar̲a pularnta kal ner̲i paṭarkuvar* (lit. trans. "they will go on the long, dry stone path through the great, tall

mountains where water is absent"). In reminding the heroine of this difficulty, the *tōḻi* is highlighting the hero's commitment to his familial obligations.

A large portion of the imagery in this poem centers on the feminine form. The *tōḻi* recounts the heroine's portrayal of the women who potentially lured away her lover. The heroine's imagination is running wild. She has fantasized scenarios of her husband with younger women as a means of self-flagellation. In doing so, we are offered an image of youthful beauty, and it is not solely corporeal. The *tōḻi*'s description—the hands with shining bangles; lips red as coral, from which charming words are uttered; they of pure thoughts who have beautiful foreheads and smear sandalwood across their young, full breasts—is not necessarily of one experienced in the arts of lovemaking. The reference to the pure thoughts (*ceyirtīr koḷkai*) betrays an unadulterated, youthful woman. This claim is also bolstered by the reference to the breasts of the women—*āram kāṅkiya alarmulai ākattu ārāk kātaloṭu* (trans. "they of unlimited love wear sandalwood on their blossoming breasts"). The reference to the blossoming breasts (*alar mulai*) suggests that the women are not fully developed, but the heartiness of their busts are such that the garlands cannot hang down between their breasts.

All of these descriptions hang together to indicate young women who are curious about the ways of love but are inexperienced in the physical act of lovemaking. What I draw from this is that the heroine perceives her beauty to be fading. Ultimately, though, the *tōḻi* recounts the imagery to bolster the confidence of the heroine and dispel her despair. The *tōḻi* tells her friend that there is no one who compares to her beauty; that she possesses exceptional form, qualities superior to the recently nubile, eager women. In forcing the heroine to peer into the mirror, so to speak, the *tōḻi* tells her that her lover would be foolish to even consider leaving. The heroine must come to terms with her

insecurities and acknowledge the real motive for her lover's absence—duty/support (*aruḷ*).

In regard to duty, *aruḷ* may also indicate a civic duty towards humanity as a whole, not just towards one's lover or spouse. While this context rarely occurs, it broadens *aruḷ*'s nuances, as we shall see below:

> O friend, live long! You know [the truth]. The hastening sun
> clears the ether, ending darkness.
> The harsh beams of light, shining brilliantly, emit heat,
> and the elongated crevices of dry earth are filled with white
> flowers of the *muruṅkai* tree,
> its giant base desiccated, completely devoid of water. 5
> A wild dog with sharp teeth has come with his hungry mate.
> In the middle of a cactus forest, on a mimosa tree
> a snail with a spiral nose has withered inside its shell,
> crisp like fried rice.
> In this difficult environment, to escape the distress of the
> extreme heat,
> the dogs sleep in the sweet shade of the hero stone 10
> commemorating those who fell to the Maṟavar's fierce arrows.
> Having associated with them, he is unable suppress his heart
> and say 'no' to those who have nothing.
> You have said that your lover loves wealth more than our pain,
> but your lover possesses compassion (*aruḷ*).
> (*Akanāṉūṟu* 53)

The emotional complexity of this piece is similar to *Aka*. 75 above, in that the heroine allows her sense of abandonment to adulterate her perception of her partner's character. One striking poetic difference here is Cīttalai Cāttaṉār's detail of the natural environment. The pervasive element is the oppressive heat: the earth is dry and the giant base of the *muruṅkai* tree is desiccated; a snail has roasted inside its shell; and feral dogs languish in the shade of a memorial stone, starving. The stone's commemoration of the fallen and the identification of the Maṟavars, who were introduced above, as their slayers underscores the hardship of the *pālai* tract. Much of the flora and fauna are having a

difficult time surviving—life is slowing, threatening a stand still. The imagery does an excellent job evoking feelings of desperation and lethargy that arise from the absence of water and lover.

The poem begins with the *tōḻi* reminding the heroine that she understands the reality of the situation. If we then move to the end of the poem, setting aside the allegorical elements for a moment, we see that the hero is a hero indeed—*illōrkku il eṉṟu iyaivatu karattal vallā neṅcam* (lit. trans. "having associated with them, he is not able to hide his heart and say 'no' to those who have nothing"). As in the piece above, the absence of the husband causes the heroine to question his motive for leaving. She reinterprets his absence as a lust for personal gain at the expense of their suffering, forgetting his altruism; and similar to the poem above, the *tōḻi* recalls for her the actual motive for his departure.

The poem's allegorical component conveys the hardship of separation. The *tōḻi* is quite astute, using it to acknowledge the suffering. However, when the allegory is read with the conclusion of the poem in mind, there seems to be a hint of irony in her description of the landscape. In other words, the *tōḻi* acknowledges the heroine's suffering, while, at the same time, indicating that the pain of separation is inevitable with a man of his nature. He has left to earn money not for himself per se, but so that he may be of service to those incapable of helping themselves.

The context indicates that *aruḷ* signifies altruism, which compels the hero to leave. He does so at the expense of his partner, placing his civic duty above the concerns of the relationship. In their translation of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, George Hart and Hank Heifetz suggest that in Tamil categories of love, *aruḷ* indicates the disinterested love that an ascetic feels towards humanity; the other two being *kātal* (romantic love) and *aṉpu*

(relational love).[88] I argue in the following chapter that in the context of heroic poetry, this is a bit overstated. While there are certain instances in which *aruḷ* does indicate an objective love (*Puṟ*. 27, for instance), on the whole it appears that the bards were hopeful to receive the king's *aruḷ* because of their talent and creativity. They had to perform to receive it. When *aruḷ* signifies a civic duty, such as providing for the impoverished, Hart and Heifetz' suggestion is applicable. The hero of this particular *pālai* tract demonstrates this very clearly; however, this is a rare instance. *Aruḷ* is not often used in the *akam* texts to indicate such a disposition.

There is an instance in the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, however, where a nameless chieftain is accused of lacking *aruḷ* for fulfilling his official duty:

> You are not caring (*aruḷātōyē*), having heard of the suffering,
> the tears shed from the wet eyelids
> of your desirable lover sulking alone at home.
> We are not your bards,
> and you are not our chieftain.
>
> (*Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 480)

This poem is one of ten in the *Pāṇaṉ Pattu* ("Bard Decad"). The mention of the chieftain draws on *puṟam* elements. In fact, this piece is similar in nature to *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 145 that we will see in the following chapter. In that poem, the bard approaches the king to urge him to return to his grieving wife. U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar and P. Jotimuttu both indicate that the chieftain has left with a war party and his wife languishes when his return is delayed. Much like *Puṟ*. 145, the bard is taking up the cause of the grieving wife. The difference, though, is that the chieftain here is not having an extramarital affair. Nonetheless, he accuses the chieftain of being uncaring because he has heard of his wife's suffering and yet chooses to stay away. The bard, who perceives the chieftain

[88] George Hart and Hank Heifetz, *The Puṟanāṉūṟu*, p. 269 n. 92.

to lack *aruḷ*, announces that their relationship is over—*niṉakki yām pāṇarēm allēm emakku/nīyum kurucilai allai* (lit. trans. "for you we are not bards, for us also you are not chief").

The difference between this poem and the one above is that *aruḷ* is not used here to convey altruism. It is true that the chieftain is away on official business, ostensibly for the integrity of his region's borders; however, *aruḷ* refers to his attitude toward his relationship, not towards the people occupying the land. The interesting dynamic here is that the grieving wife, who has recruited the bard as her messenger, is more concerned about her own plight than that of the region; and she would gladly encourage him to relinquish his duties. In essence, she has asked him to make a decision between her and his duty as chieftain.

§ 3. CONCLUSION

As we have seen throughout the course of this chapter, *aruḷ* is transformative. It has the ability to either disrupt emotional worlds or cause them to bloom; however, we can only infer the latter, as *aruḷ* is discussed when it is absent. The characters do make reference to what their lives would become if it were indeed present; we can also deduce more cheerful scenarios because these are the opposite of what the poems convey. All that is missing in the mix is the lover's *aruḷ*.

The absence of *aruḷ* indicates the absence of sexual favor, affection, or duty. All of the characters in these poems long for their partners' *aruḷ* because they want their lives to return to normality. Despite the mood, whether it be lovers' union or separation, *aruḷ* is absent. The intensity of its effects, however, are different depending on the amount of time that has passed since the lover bestowed *aruḷ* on the beloved. As we saw, a person's body has the unique disposition to reflect emotional states. When *aruḷ* has been absent for a considerable length of time, the body begins to fade and bangles, for instance, may

fall from slender wrists. We also witnessed contexts in which its absence has wrought havoc on the beloved's perception of the lover, herself, and past events. Since the absence of *aruḷ* is the common topic, we must extrapolate from these contexts the effects it has when it is present. The emotional world of the beloved would flourish if *aruḷ* were present; the body would be in peak shape; and there would be no need to question the fidelity of the lover.

What is primarily at issue in these poems are notions of power and dominance and the ways in which sex and emotional obligation or duty play into these. The collection of poems above certainly seems to address this more than they do physical union. Affectionate duty and all its adhering nuances seem to be the most accurate interpretation. The gloss of sexual favor arises most frequently in those poems set in the *tiṇai* of *kuriñci*, but there, too, I would argue that what the narrators really want is security and they long to be the object of affection.

As we transition to classical poetry from the *puṟam* genre, *akam* poetics should be kept in mind; we are leaving a poetic world colored with emotion and ambiguity for a world steeped in politics and war. *Puṟam* poetry, however, frequently reflects political relationships and calls upon the kings or chieftains to perform their duty, which, among other things, should include affection for the poets. In other words, the rulers should bestow their *aruḷ* upon the poets, and this had the potential of altering the poets' lived reality. Thus, the term continues to convey intimacy, albeit of a different sort, that had the potential to change worlds. Furthermore, *aruḷ*'s inclusion in the royal vocabulary provided a different set of nuances that were largely not present in the *akam* genre, providing further reason for its inclusion into Śaiva religious vocabulary.

Chapter Two: The Poetics of Gifting and Governance—*Aruḷ* in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*

The image of classical Tamil society on display in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (ca. 100-250 CE) is one of internecine warfare and conquest, and framed in the bullion from the kings' largesse. Around this image hang garlands of panegyric—400 poems composed by more than 150 poets in praise of their benefactors. This, at least, is the most common image. Behind the hero-worship, however, are snapshots of institutions, of familial and social relationships, of disgrace and redemption, and of the possibility of reward in the afterlife.

In this chapter, I will analyze the relationship between the concept *aruḷ* and idealized notions of *caṅkam* kingship as portrayed in the *puṟam* text, the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. The use of the term in this context provides further clues as to why the Śaiva authors chose *aruḷ* to designate Śiva's fundamental principle. Since literary depictions of Śiva were fashioned after images of *caṅkam* kings, as George Hart and Indira Peterson have argued, then understanding a *caṅkam* king's *aruḷ* is a necessary step in uncovering the cultural underpinnings behind the theology.[89] In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, *aruḷ* functions slightly differently than it does in the *akam* texts. For one, *aruḷ* is a term in the royal vocabulary: it is used to describe a state of being that a king should obtain; however, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, *aruḷ* may also carry the emotional nuances found in the *akam* genre.

The *Puṟanāṉūṟu* suggests several central qualities that were incumbent upon a *caṅkam* king to possess: military prowess, generosity, impartiality, guardianship, and other related states of being, such as mercy and compassion; and when a king embodied a

[89] George Hart *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, p. 13; Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, pp. 33-40.

balance of these attributes, he achieved power and glory. The sheer number of references made to military might in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* insinuate that this quality was of utmost importance, second to none. As K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has pointed out, a *caṅkam* king of superior status possessed a garland of crowns from seven vanquished kings.[90] The other central qualities—generosity, impartiality, mercy, guardianship, and compassion—do not frame classical *puṟam* poetry as overtly as a king's military talent. However, they too lie at the core of archetypal *caṅkam* kingship. If a king proved brilliant on the battlefield but was inept in managing affairs of the state or his personal life, his fame would be tarnished. The term *aruḷ* is almost exclusively associated with this latter group of attributes, not military might.[91]

Previous translations of the noun *aruḷ* in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* have yielded a variety of English glosses: love (relational), kindness, generosity, mercy, and compassion; verbal and adverbial forms have been rendered as giving, granting, generously, lovingly, and having pity.[92] While semantic consistency is too much to expect when grappling with a text that was composed by multiple authors over a period of a century and a half, it is striking that, when read together, these translations highlight more of an over-arching, selfless disposition than they do isolated actions or temperaments. As I mentioned in the introduction, the infinitive form of *aruḷ* may be translated as 'to love' or 'to give' depending on the context. The act of loving and the act of giving are discrete. One may inform the other at times, but they still remain distinct; and yet √*aruḷ* conveys both. At the risk of sounding reductionist, I contend that the above translations signify the results

[90] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, p.132.
[91] In *Puṟ*. 27 (see below) the term *aruḷ* is used to indicate a disposition the king, Ceṭceṉṉi Nalaṅkiḷḷi, should *not* have for his enemies; however, in this poem the term is juxtaposed with another use of the term *aruḷ*, which describes the disposition the king *ought* to have for his subjects.
[92] For an excellent translation of the entire *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, see George Hart and Hank Heifetz, *The Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom*.

of an underlying disposition that is difficult to render contextually because it is demonstrated through specific actions and temperaments, such as granting or being compassionate.

As a concept, *aruḷ* was in its literary nascency during the classical period. In the *Puṟanaṉūṟu*, *aruḷ* occurs on twenty-two occasions in the four hundred poems. Despite the infrequent usage of the term, it is difficult to overstate the conceptual importance that *aruḷ* had in categorizing kingship. Its weight as a concept is witnessed in its adoption and semantic expansion in the vocabulary of the Śaiva *bhakti* literary tradition. In contrast with Māṇikkavācakar's text and given the parameters of the *Puranāṉūṟu* itself, the appearance of *aruḷ* in the text is relatively small; however, for those poets whose compositions revolve around this concept, *aruḷ* is elevated beyond its position as secondary to military prowess. These poets use all its grammatical flavors to demonstrate *aruḷ*'s centrality in a king's comportment. Before we analyze the specifics of the concept in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, we should understand first the text and *puṟam* poetics.

§ 1. PUṞAM POETRY: THE PUṞANĀNŪṞU

It has been argued that, historically speaking, the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is the most important text of the Classical period. It offers images of social structure and life on the ground in far greater detail than any of the other anthologies. After U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar's (1855-1942) discovery of the *Caṅkam* manuscripts in the late nineteenth century, nationalism reverberated through the ranks of Tamil society. The mention of names and royal lineages in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* sent scholars scrambling to prove its historicity; and in doing so, academics hoped to show the antiquity of the Tamil language and place their literary tradition on par with the Sanskrit tradition. [93] Thus, genealogies

[93] Martha Ann Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night*, p. 10.

were composed; character studies of the subjects were undertaken; and timelines were charted.[94] Sadly, however, the possibility of securing such substantiation proved infeasible. Far too many gaps and inconsistencies existed for there to be any real consensus. This enterprise did not prove futile, however. Scholars began approaching the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* with different concerns and alternative methodologies.

As the title tells us, the text contains four hundred *puṟam* poems (*puṟa*=*puṟam*; *nāl-ṉūṟu*= 400).[95] As I mentioned above, *puṟam* poetry describes the 'exterior' life: public space, politics, war and death. The poems collected here refer to kings and chieftains from all three political regions in south India, namely the Cēra, Coḻa, and Pāṇṭiya. The poets recount military expeditions and public executions. They provide images of the royal court and burial practices. More often than not these descriptions are embedded within a poet's praising of the character and habits of his or her benefactor as a means to petition for their largesse. There are some poems that reprimand a king or chieftain for his immoral behavior. In these instances, all external signs of homage are absent. It is difficult to determine whether these poems of rebuke were meant to work as 'reverse psychology.' In the later bhakti tradition, for instance, poems of admonition were composed as an ironic means to praise Śiva.[96] Without a wider context, the use of this tactic is difficult to substantiate.

In these poetic appeals—whether in praise or in criticism—we are able to formulate an idea of what the poets considered to be attributes of a perfected king.

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[94] See K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, *Chronology of the Early Tamils* (Madras: University of Madras, 1932); K. G. Aiyar Sesha, *Cēra Kings of the Sanga Period* (London: Luzac and Co, 1937); V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* (Madras: Higgenbotham and Co. 1904); P.T.S. Aiyangar, *History of the Tamils*, reprint (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982); John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies*.
[95] There are actually 397 extant poems in this text.
[96] I am thinking specifically of Māṇikkavācakar's sixth hymn in the *Tiruvācakam*, 'Nīttal Viṇṇappam.' In this hymn, Māṇikkavācakar abuses Śiva for abandoning him. It is clear that he is being ironic, and uses harsh language and threats as a means to glorify Śiva.

Fortunately, this practice of glorifying or criticizing a king or chieftain provides a window into some of the socio-cultural customs and categories of thought. Unfortunately, this window is a bit opaque because the eight anthologies are the primary sources for constructing an image of that society. While the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* may offer more information about the social structure and life on the ground than the other anthologies, its historicity is difficult to corroborate. Despite substantiating this, there are still issues about classical Tamil kingship that should be discussed.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this project is contending with a text that was composed over the course of 150 years from three rival political regions. During that period it is almost certain that notions of the archetypal king, as well as ideas on the nature of *aruḷ*, underwent degrees of change. It would be ideal if we could create a chronology of the poems to monitor those possible modifications, but unfortunately, there are no dates for the composition of each specific poem, and it would be virtually impossible to reconstruct accurately a chronology with the existing evidence. The more than one hundred and fifty authors represented in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* forces us to deduce the larger theoretical categories from an array of context-specific descriptions. Therefore, the image of the archetypal king is a compilation rooted in references from a variety of discrete poems because they are arranged thematically and by number of lines, and not in any sequential order. Therefore, we cannot expect to trace the implicit debate on the nature of the paradigmatic ruler. We can, at the very least, hope to understand the relationship between the conceptual significance of *aruḷ* and notions of the ideal king; but we must also remember, as I mentioned above, that we are bound by the desires of the authors.

Unraveling the relationship between a ruler and the concept *aruḷ* casts greater light on the figure portrayed as the axis of *caṅkam* society. This is significant insofar as

the kings and chieftains are frequently depicted as bearing the burden of maintaining order and harmony within society. It is not surprising, then, that the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is abounding in descriptions of proper kingship. The text is, in fact, a poetic treatise on governance, among other concerns. The *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, however, has not received the amount of scholarly attention that other treatises on governance and statecraft have received; the most notable among these being the Sanskrit *Arthaśāstra* and *Maṇusmṛti*. The reason for this, perhaps, is that there is no systematized, theoretical basis for the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. There are no descriptions of the origins of monarchy, for instance; or of the origins of the king's authority; or of the nature of the world prior to the coming of the king. It appears that this knowledge is presupposed. It is evident, however, that the authors' compositions bear varying degrees of cosmological and ontological understanding of the nature of kingship and the structure of the cosmos.

Despite this difficulty, an in-depth study of the nuanced facets of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is vital to further our understanding of the nature of kingship in pre-modern India. This is significant insofar as the paradigm of the *caṅkam* ruler is removed from the ideals of kingship described in the Sanskrit *śāstric* or *purāṇic* literature. There are several differences between the *caṅkam* king and the "Sanskritic" king of northern India. As George Hart points out, the king in classical Tamil society was the embodiment of the sacred powers that had to be under control for society to function properly. It appears that there was no group of people, such as brahmins, other than the king who were capable of being in charge of the sacred.[97] This is not to suggest that brahmin priests were not present during the classical period. They were, in fact. There are a number of references to brahmins in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*; however, their tasks seem to be limited to

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[97] George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, pp. 13-14.

presiding over the war sacrifice (*Puṟ.* 26) or piercing the corpses of those who died in bed to free them of the sin of not dying on the battlefield (*Puṟ.* 93). The position of the brahmins as lesser ritual functionaries in ancient Tamilnadu, then, was far different than their portrayal in the *śāstric* literature.[98] Thus, it was the king who enjoyed the charge of all things other-worldly, while simultaneously exercising dominion over the profane.

The extant literature also makes clear that the *caṅkam* kings were not perceived as partial incarnations of or related to Hindu deities. The kings did wield certain powers that may be understood as divine-like, such as causing the rains to come, and thus, the harvest to grow; but this is not to say that those powers were replications of the faculties of Hindu gods. Take, for instance, *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 186. The author, Mōcikīraṉār, is situating the king within a hierarchical structure in the world. In his language resides an implicit cosmological framework that we should use to better understand the role of the king:

> Rice is not the life of the world nor is water the life!
> The king is the life of this world with its wide expanses!
> And so it is incumbent upon a king
> who maintains an army
> wielding many spears to know of himself:
> "I am this world's life!"[99]

This poem is one example of how the king was perceived within a larger cosmological framework. The poet describes the king as the life of the world. This is not necessarily implying that he was considered divine; rather, he was considered the life of the world because he possessed the power to order the disorder. This disorder that resides in the universe is often depicted in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* as analogous to battle—note the reference to the army wielding many spears in line five of the translation. The sense

[98] *Ibid*., pp. 55-56.
[99] Translation by George Hart, *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, p. 119.

of this poem, then, is that the king is situated at the top of a hierarchy of necessity. The poet is implying that without the king the world will devolve into its natural state of disorder and harvests will not yield rice and the flow of water will not be constant. As several scholars have pointed out, in fact, many of the Hindu deities in the south were subsequently modeled on *caṅkam* kings, particularly in representations in Tamil literature.[100]

This suggestion contrasts with the prescriptions found in the Sanskrit texts on governance and statecraft. The *Arthaśāstra* (1.13.1-11) suggests that the king's role on earth was similar to that of gods. This proposition is advanced in relating the monarch to the first king, Manu, the son of Vivasvat, the Sun. The first ruler, then, was believed a descendant of a deity. The text qualifies this proposal in claiming that kings occupy the position of Indra and Yama on earth. The notion of the divine origins of kings, however, has yet to be fully expounded in the *Arthaśāstra*. In the *Maṇusmṛti* (7.3-8), the idea of divine origin is far more systematized. In this passage it is asserted that the king was created out of the essences of eight divinities: Indra, Anila, Yama, Arka, and others. The king was believed to be endowed with the powers of these deities and is touted as a great divinity in human form.[101]

This paradigm of kingship was ultimately adopted in the Tamil regions; however, this did not occur until the rise of the Pallava dynasty (sixth to ninth centuries CE) in the eastern coastal regions of Tamilnadu. With the emergence of these monarchs we witness the "Sanskritic" influence on notions of kingship and the "Brahminization" of society.[102]

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[100] See, Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience*; George Hart and Hank Heifetz, *The Puṟanāṉūṟu*, p. xviii; Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*.
[101] R. P. Kangle, *Arthaśāstra* vol. 3 (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1960-65), p. 117.
[102] Burton Stein, *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press),pp.

As these ideas further develop during the medieval period, we arrive at a model of kingship under the Cōḻa dynasty (ninth to fourteenth centuries CE) that owes little visible allegiance to the earlier *caṅkam* king. Daud Ali refers to the *praśasti*-s or eulogies from copper-plate inscriptions that describe the genealogy of Cōḻa kings as intimately related to the Solar and Lunar dynasties in *śāstric* and *purāṇic* literature. This genealogy suggests, then, that Cōḻa kingship was modeled on notions of Hindu divinity. The *praśasti*-s, in fact, trace the lineage of the Cōḻa monarchs as beginning with the first king in the universe, Manu, the son of Vivasvat, the Sun, up to Rājendra, the monarch who commissioned the inscription.[103] This lineage is identical to the one propounded in the *Arthaśāstra* mentioned above. That the Cōḻa *praśasti*-s trace their lineage to divine origins, we are therefore given a categorical declaration on the origins of their authority and an explanation for their other-worldly power.

Furthermore, as I mentioned above, the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is not rooted in a consistent theoretical basis. Unlike the *Arthaśāstra* or the *Maṇusmṛti*, the text is not arranged as an 'instruction manual' on political science; rather, it is the product of a number of discrete authors who composed poems as a means to solicit money and fame from their benefactors or to warn them of the consequences of ruling improperly.

In addition to the obligation of the king to order the bedlam in the natural state of the world, there is a disorder of another sort that must also be mollified. This chaos emerges in the personal lives of his subjects; and most frequently this turmoil stems from poverty. Assuaging this distress requires more than mere generosity. As I will show, the trait that a king must possess, aside from his military prowess, is possessing *aruḷ*, an

[103] Daud Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History—Rethinking Copper-plate Inscriptions in Cōḻa India," in *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*, ed. Ronald Inden (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 176-181.

elevated state of consciousness from which generosity, benevolence, and compassion emanate forth unrestrained.

§ 2. The Poets and Their Poetics

The poets of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* were heavily reliant on the kings and chieftains they praised for survival. This is apparent in the sycophantic nature of the encomia. This was not, however, one-sided, as many scholars have indicated.[104] Ideally, there existed a reciprocal relationship between patron and poet that manifested in a close, intimate bond. While the king was responsible for the uplift and maintenance of a poet's livelihood, the poet, in turn, was the promoter of the benefactor's fame and glory. As David Shulman points out, the poets enjoyed a monopoly of sorts on the major values of society; and, therefore, they determined whether a person achieved *pukaḻ* ("glory") or *paḻi* ("blame"). A king was immortalized or criticized in the songs that persisted after he perished. It was not merely enough that the king was victorious in battle or generous with his subjects to achieve *pukaḻ*: a king's actions needed to be recorded and disseminated through verse. If the king's acts were gracious—if he accepted his duty and lavished gifts upon the poet—then his earthly fame would be ever remembered. If, on the other hand, the king was derelict in his duty and failed to support the poet, then he ran the risk of being mocked and having his legacy eternally tarnished. Thus, the king needed the poet no less than the poet needed the king.[105]

It is true, indeed, that many of the poems in the compilation are replete with either *pukaḻ* or *paḻi*. However, there are a significant number of poems within the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* that fit somewhere in between veneration and condemnation. These poems were

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104 See, for instance, David Shulman, "Poets and Patrons in Tamil Literature and Literary Legend," in *The Wisdom of Poets—Studies in Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 67-71; K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 55-93.
105 David Shulman, *op. cit*., pp. 68-70.

composed as a reminder to a king of his intrinsic duty. The poems under consideration here fit into this liminal category between glory and shame. The question that arises, then, is how did the audience receive such poems after the death of a ruler? If a primary motivation behind the poetry was to create the legacy of a king, then these compositions are somewhat removed from that end. In these poems the king is situated on the threshold between *pukaḻ* and *paḻi*. The poet places the ball in the king's court, so to speak. Whichever way his legacy is to fall is entirely incumbent upon the king himself. Thus, the nature of these poems serves not only as a reminder to the king of his duty, but also as an implicit threat that his actions will be the subject of future poems.

There is an intrinsic benefit to these poetic reminders. They provide a different sort of cultural window to peer through than the sycophantic compositions offer. The authors here give more nuanced clues about the nature of classical Tamil kingship. The panegyrics of praise delineate ideas about the archetypal king; however, the encomiast does not necessarily elaborate on the subtleties of certain qualities because the hero has achieved the state of *pukaḻ*. It is in the reminder where the poet further reveals the nuances of kingship through juxtaposing terms and comparing states of being.

This occurs too in the poems situated in the negative side, in *paḻi*, albeit to a lesser extent. The majority of these poems are set up more as warnings of the repercussions that will efface the king's *pukaḻ* for failing in his duty. The sense with much of the *paḻi*-leaning poetry is that the king has committed some egregious error in his royal comportment; however, there is hope. If he modifies his selfish behavior, shunning the faulty path, and embraces a set of ideals, then he may find redemption and everlasting glory in verse.

Since the poets were principally responsible for the glory or shame of a king, we see in the poems below that they sought, in a sense, to blackmail him to alleviate either

their personal suffering or that of another person. In many of the instances in which *aruḷ* is employed there exists an implicit tension between *pukal̲* and *pal̲i*. The poets are reminding their respective benefactors of the charge that they possess, and that they will utilize their power over social memory if their demands are not met. Thus, the decision is left to the king as to how he wants to be remembered. It is in this sense that this set of poems should be understood.

§ 3. *ARUḶ* AND KINGSHIP

Perhaps the best place to begin is with *Pur̲anān̲ūr̲u* 5. In this poem we find a juxtaposition of *aruḷ* with *an̲pu*. These terms stand in a close, interdependent relationship. In modern Tamil, the term *an̲pu* signifies familial or relational love. In the context of the *Pur̲anān̲ūr̲u*, the nuance can extend beyond the confines of kinship ties or friendship, but it still signifies that non-romantic love one has for another. In particular, it refers to the love a king has for his subjects. This is compared with the protective and nurturing feelings a parent has for a child. The difference here is that *an̲pu* refers to the feeling a king has for his subjects generally, not specifically. It is *aruḷ* that signifies the emotional and sympathetic awareness one should possess when interacting with specific individuals. In this poem Nariverūut Talaiyār is instructing a king, Cēramān̲ Karuvūrēr̲iya Oḷvāṭ Kōpperuñcēralirumpor̲ai, on ruling properly:

> O You, whose land bears forest,
> mighty like elephants spread in groups everywhere,
> with black stones that resemble water buffaloes.
> If you are the one, I will say something:
> Do not be like those who endure an unforgivable 5
> hell because they eliminated love (*an̲pu*) and
> also compassion (*aruḷ*)!
> Protect (*ompumati*) like one who cares for children.

It is indeed difficult to possess mercy (*aḷi*).[106]

(*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 5)

In the fifth and sixth lines, the author warns the king on the result of ruling improperly. If he does so, then he will become stained by an unforgivable sin. To avoid this, the author reveals two necessary qualities: *aṉpu* and *aruḷ*. The implication here is that to rule otherwise means that one is not concerned with the welfare of the kingdom, that he acts out of self-interest. The poet then follows this caution with advice on how to act. In the seventh line, he compares ruling a kingdom with protecting and caring for children. In other words, the poet intimates that the king should place the interests of his subjects above his own. His actions should be imbued with *aṉpu*. The poem ends with an observation on the difficulty of acquiring the ability to have *aḷi* or mercy. This comment is different than, but directly related to the comparison of leadership with parenting. It is dissimilar in that the ability to be merciful involves interacting with people on an individual, subjective level. On the other hand, it is related because the ability to act in such a way requires the cultivation of objective love first.

There are several factors that support this proposition. Structurally, the author presents the two concepts in the form of a warning. After this initial introduction, he then qualifies each one with a separate sentence. Given the definition of the term and the context, the comparison between parenting and proper leadership undoubtedly modifies *aṉpu*. In regard to qualifying *aruḷ*, the eighth line serves this purpose. The noun *aḷi* is classified as one of its synonyms. It stands in for *aruḷ* in certain instances, but ultimately

[106] erumai yaṉṉa karuṅkal liṭaitō/ṟāṉiṟ parakkum yāṉaiya muṉpiṟ/kāṉaka nāṭaṉai nīyō peruma/nīyō rākali ṉiṉṉōṉṟu moḻival/aruḷu maṉpu nīkki nīṅkā/nirayaṅ koḷ pavaro ṭoṉṟātu kāval/kuḻavi koḷpavari ṉōmpumati/aḷitō tāṉēyatu peṟalaruṅ kuraittē.

lacks the ability to convey the wider nuances that *aruḷ* does. The interest here is the poet's reflection on the difficulty of acting with such an awareness.

Aṉpu and *aruḷ* are interdependent and juxtaposed in this poem. They are juxtaposed here because of their allegiance to an underlying, altruistic state of consciousness. However, the juxtaposition brings to light not only that the terms possess differing shades of meaning, but also that there exists a certain hierarchy of states of consciousness. The poet uses a respectful form of the imperative √*ombu* (protect) when he urges the king to protect like a parent, to rule with *aṉpu*. The suffix '*mati*' attached to the imperative signifies not only a certain familiarity that the poet has with the king, but also reveals a degree of remove. The author then contrasts this respectful imperative with the emphatic, neuter predicate *aruṅkuraittē* ('rare' or 'difficult') when he discusses the difficulty of obtaining the quality of *aḷi*.

The use of these two forms plays well into uncovering the hierarchy of the terms. The author respectfully commands the king to rule in a certain way; he then observes the difficulty in extending that rule to include *aḷi* or, by extension, *aruḷ*. In reading the poem this way, we see the poet underscoring his notion of the ideal ruler as one who should first possess *aṉpu* and then diligently work to cultivate *aruḷ*. In this way, the poet places *aruḷ* as the highest and most difficult state of consciousness to obtain, but one that is necessary to achieve perfection in governing his subjects.

The poet also tells us that one must continuously strive to maintain these states of consciousness. It is not simply the case that once one has achieved these states, they will always embody the ideal of the archetypal ruler. The use of the adverbial participle *nīkki* governing both *aṉpu* and *aruḷ* speaks to this fact. The verbal root of this participle is √*nīkku*. It translates into English as 'cut,' 'remove,' or 'eradicate.' In the current context, this particular participle points to the potential difficulty of preserving that

sympathetic awareness that arises with the cultivation of *aṉpu* and *aruḷ*. I make this claim based on the transitive nature of the verb. √*Nīkku* is often used to describe the removal of a physical object or the eradication of a debilitating condition or an emotion. Thus, the poet reveals that it is not only possible to have developed these two qualities and achieved a higher state of awareness, but also, and most importantly, that it is possible to fall from this plane of consciousness. In using the adverbial participle *nīkki*, the author suggests that eradicating both *aṉpu* and *aruḷ* was a calculated decision; or, at the very least, that it could have been avoided. Thus, we are presented with the notion that the ideal ruler is always in a tenuous state because there exists the possibility of advertently or inadvertently eradicating *aṉpu* and/or *aruḷ*.

We are also able to glean from this context that the author considers the elimination of *aṉpu* and *aruḷ* to result in the acquisition of an unforgivable sin. The negative, intransitive adjectival participle *nīṅkā* ("not remove", "ceaseless") modifying *nirayam* ("sin," or "hell") clearly implies this fact. The verbal root of *nīṅkā* (√*nīṅku*) is directly related to the transitive verbal root √*nīkku*. Not only does the use of both the transitive and the intransitive verb in sequential order speak to the creativity of the poet, but it also suggests a cosmological and ontological paradigm that is governed by certain irreversible cause and effect relationships. The implicit issue here is not that the sinners never attained *aṉpu*- or *aruḷ*-consciousness; rather, the issue is that they had attained this awareness, but were unable to remain at that level of consciousness. The poem suggests that for selfish motives they disregarded the ethics in governing. The fact that in doing so one obtains a sin so great that even penance does not remove the tarnish further suggests that a ruler must constantly strive to maintain perfection.

In *Puṟ*. 27 we see a very similar situation as above. The author, Uṟaiyūr Mutukaṇṇaṉ Cāttaṉār, offers his benefactor advice on how to rule properly.

If you count those who sat majestically,
having been born to equally excellent families,
like a row of one hundred-petaled flowers,
vibrant in colors that bloom on the
        lotus that grows in the mud,
they are few who have both fame and song! 5
Indeed there are many who have perished
        like petals on a lotus!
Poets will sing of the glorious who,
having accomplished the necessary deeds, acquire
a sky chariot that does not require
        a driver in heaven.
O my lord! Ceṭceṉṉi Nalaṅkiḷḷi! I have heard this! 10
In the ever-moving world, the celestial moon
reveals for the ignorant
the existence of diminishment, the existence
        of growth;
the existence of birth and death.
Having seen the sides of those suffering
        who have come, 15
regardless if they are capable or not,
may you of strength become compassionate (*aruḷa*);
do not give or have compassion (*aruḷ*) for
those of strength who oppose you, whose strength
never fades, in enmity.[107]

(*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 27)

This poem's similarity to *Puṟ*. 5 that we saw above is the emphasis on performing duty properly. Cāttaṉār is explaining that given the flux of life, he should spontaneously become (*ākumati*) possessed of *aruḷ* (trans. compassion) at the sight of the loyal whose bodies betray suffering and hunger. The poet then contrasts this emphasis with a context in when he should not have *aruḷ* or, here, compassion for others, his foes. The first nine

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[107] cēṟṟu vaḷar tāmarai payanta oṇ kēḻ/nūṟṟu itaḻ alariṉ nirai kaṇṭaṉaṉ/vēṟṟumai illā viḻut tiṇaip piṟantu/vīṟṟituntōrai eṇṇum kālai/uraiyum pāṭṭum uṭaiyōr cilarē/marai ilai pōla pāynticinōr palarē/pulavar pāṭum pukaḻuṭaiyōr vicumpiṉ/valavaṉ ēvā vāṉa ūrti/eytupa eṉpa tam cey viṉai mutittu eṉak/kēṭpal entai cēṭceṉṉi nalaṅkiḷḷi/tēytal uṇmaiyum perukal uṇmaiyum/māytal uṇmaiyum piṟattal uṇmaiyum/aṟiyā tōraiyum aṟiyak kāṭṭi/tiṅkaṭ puttēḷ tiritarum ulakattu/vallār āyiṉum vallunar āyiṉum/varunti vantōr maruṅku nōkki/aruḷa vallai ākumati aruḷ ilar/koṭā amai vallar ākuka/keṭā ata tuppiṉ niṉ pakai etirnatōrē.

lines of the poem describe for Ceṭceṉṉi Nalaṅkiḻḻi the benefits of ruling properly, of being one who responds in certain contexts in the appropriate way. Those who have done so have reaped a driverless chariot to escort them to heaven. This is the alternative to *Puṟ*. 5, where those who ruled without *aruḷ* and *aṉpu* suffered unrelenting hell or unforgivable sin. The swelling of *aruḷ* or compassion that should occur is similar to a king protecting his subjects like a parent.

In *Puṟ*. 159, *aruḷ* is situated in a different sort of poem. The author, Peruñcittiraṉār, has approached his benefactor, Kumaṇaṉ, for monetary support to alleviate his penury. Peruñcittiraṉār is one of the more arrogant poets under consideration here, and because of it, we are able to uncover some of the conceptual underpinnings of *aruḷ* that would otherwise be lost with a more humble person.

> My aged mother has repeatedly complained,
> "many years have passed [and] I am alive, there is
> no ending to my life." She minces her steps, using a stick
> that has become her sturdy leg; her hair fans out like string;
> she cannot go out to the courtyard.
> And my wife, who has grown hungry, blames duty; she
> wears a torn cloth with stains. Along with her body fading, she has endured
> tormenting thoughts; her breasts have
> withered
> from the sucking and squeezing of the many children
> around her
> waist. In desperation, she plucks a young, tender shoot of
> the *kīrai* plant,
> that has already been picked over, growing in the trash.
> Without any salt, she puts the plant in a pot and mounts
> it over the fire. She has no memory of boiled rice;
> and without buttermilk, she eats the green leaf.
> You should gratify the hearts of these two.
> I have praised the fame for your generosity, which
> is like a thunderous cloud that unleashed rain for the
> millet that has not yet raised its beautiful dark ears, sown
> among wild rice on land burned by forest dwellers
> and plowed into an expanding field.
> You should also gratify my relatives who are emaciated,

chewed upon by hunger.
Even if I were to receive a war elephant
with tusks raised high , I would not accept a gift released
from [your] indifference;
but if you gave out of joy and the desire to please,
I would accept even the small red seed of a crab eye.
Kumaṇa, whose spear is sharp! Chief of eminent fame,
who was born into a perfect and noble lineage! Who is
famed for victories! I desire you to be possessed of
generosity (*aruḷ*), to become one who pleases.[108]

(*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 159)

Peruñcittiraṉār presents a rich context with which we may begin to get a clearer picture on the nature of *aruḷ*. This poem has three separate but interrelated parts. In the first portion of the poem, the author paints for the king an image of his life. In this world there is an ailing mother who wishes for death, and a cynical wife whose body and mind are withering. The poet closes this section of the poem with a request for the king to pacify their heavy hearts. In the second portion of the poem, the author reminds the king that he has already sung of his generosity. He describes the *tiṇai* (landscape) as a means to compare and to classify the king's largesse. His generosity is likened to a storm cloud that has saturated the earth hosting the newly planted harvest. The author closes this section with a request for the king to alleviate the caustic hunger of his relatives.

The generosity that spurred the king's fame is designated here with a past tense, adjectival participle of √*ī* (to give), *ītta*. There is a social hierarchy embedded in the

[108] vāḻu nāḷō ṭiyāṇṭu pala vuṇmaiyiṟ/ṟīrtalcel lāteṉ ṉuyireṉap palapulantu/kōl kāl āka kuṟum pala otuṉki/nūlvirit taṉṉa katuppiṉaḷ kaṇṭuyiṉṟu/puṉṟiṟ pōkā mutirviṉaḷ yāyum/pacanta mēṉiyoṭu paṭaraṭa varunti/maruṉkiṟ koṇṭa palkuṟu mākkaḷ/picaintutiṉa vāṭiya mulaiyaḷ peritaḻintu/kuppai kīrai koykaṇ ṇakaitta/muṟṟā viḷattaḷir koytu koṇṭuppiṉṟu/nīrulai yāka vēṟṟi mōriṉ/ṟavilppata maṟantu pācaṭaku micaintu/mācoṭu kuṟainta vuṭukkaiya ḷaṟampḻiyāt/tuvvā ḷākiya veṉ vey yōḷum/eṉṟāṅ kiruvar neṅcamu muvappak kāṉavar/karipuṉa mayakkiya vakaṉkaṭ kollai/aivaṉam vitti maiyuṟak kaviṉi/īnal cellā vēṉaṟ kiḻumeṉak/karuvi vāṉan talai i yāṅkum/ītta niṉpuka ḻēttit tokkaveṉ/paci tiṉat tiraṅkiya vokkalu muvappa/uyarntēntu maruppiṟ kolkaḷiṟu peṟiṉum/tavirntuviṭu paricil koḷḷale ṉuvantunī/iṉpuṟ viṭuti yāyiṟ ciṟitu/kuṉṟiyuṅ koḷval kūrvēṟ kumaṇa/ataṟpaṭa varuḷal vēṇṭuval viṟaṟpukaḻ/vacaiyil viḻuttiṇaip piṟanta/icaimēn tōṉṟaṉiṟ pāṭiya yāṉē.

nuances of this verb. √Ī designates the act of giving to a person of inferior status. The semantics are certainly befitting the context, in that there is no other person higher in the social hierarchy than the king. We learn in the third section, however, that Peruñcittiraṉār seeks more than generosity.

Peruñcittiraṉār opens this portion of the poem with the first of two episodes juxtaposed in opposition. He claims that he would refuse the gift of an elephant if it were not given with a certain attitude. The Tamil is a bit difficult to capture in English. Peruñcittiraṉār uses the adverbial participle *tavirntu* (√*tavir*: to abstain from; to avoid; to shun) to convey the absence of the appropriate intention.[109] The literal translation suggests that if the king gave the elephant without seeing him, without caring to know who he is as a poet, then he would not accept it. This theme occurs in another of Peruñcittiraṉār's poems (*Puṟ*. 208; see below), if indeed it was composed by the same person. In *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 208, he chastises king Atiyamāṉ Neṭumāṉ Añci for offering him a gift without taking the effort to understand him. Generosity, then, is less important than the awareness of his personal qualities. With the appropriate awareness of Peruñcittiraṉār's plight and his talent, generosity is issued.

Peruñcittiraṉār then develops his ideal circumstances. If the king were possessed of joy and the desire to please him, then a gift as tiny as the red seed of a crab eye would suffice. Peruñcittiraṉār's juxtaposition of the war elephant with the red seed of a crab eye underscores the importance that he places on the king's proper intention. Something as mammoth as a war elephant would be worthless if the king were indifferent to him; but if the king gave something small with the intention of pleasing him, then it would be as if it were as large as an elephant.

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[109] I translated the adverbial participle *tavirntu* as a noun— "indifference"—in the poem. While this does not correspond with the grammar of the poem, it does, I think, capture the spirit of the line.

Peruñcittiraṉār closes the poem urging the king to be one possessed of *aruḷ*. In order to achieve this state, the king must become one who pleases. But what does Peruñcittiranār mean when he asks Kumaṇaṉ to have the desire to please? The king should *want* to understand the depth of his character and the plight of his family. Once Kumaṇaṉ cultivates a sympathetic attitude towards the poet, then he has achieved *aruḷ*-consciousness and will give the gifts not out of obligation, but from his own storehouse of understanding and sympathy.

The author of *Puṟ.* 393, Nalliṟaiyaṉār, has a similar request as Peruñcittiraṉār, that is to assist him in reclaiming the status that he deserves. His demands, though grandiose, are not as laden with the degree of arrogance of the former poet. Nonetheless, he believes that once his benefactor, Cōḻaṉ Kuḷamuṟṟattut Tuñciya Kiḷḷivaḷavaṉ, demonstrates his *aruḷ*, then he will be rewarded with the material goods he ought to have.

> From the beginning I did not experience
>   the distress in my life,
> now the sharpness of my mind has spoiled along
>   with my young wife who has been with
>   me for a long time.
> None give though I have sung at each house. Thus,
>   I suffer.
> Since there are none in other lands who understand
>   their duty
> and will turn upright our earthen pot that has lost its
>   desire to cook,
> thus with my mind thoughtful about who of the
> generous will accept me, and accompanied by the
>   harassment of longing, I thought of your glory.
> O King! You who wears a garland of flowers!
> Who appears like the entire world gathered in one place!
> You should give (*aruḷa*) meat that is white with fat,
> like bundles of summer cotton completely filling a house,
> and torn into pieces, to remove the oppressive hunger
> of my many relatives whose hands have forgotten
>   moisture.
> Having replaced my old rags that are torn,

resembling the tongue of a serpent ready to
give birth,
dress me in clothes with folds wide
like the bud of the *pakaṉṟai* at blossoming time.
Give (*nalkumati*) wholeheartedly this wealth! O Great
One!
O King of the good land where the *Kaviri* River
flows without fail even in the summer
when all things wither like a dancing girl;
having beat a rhythm on the great *kiṇai* drum
that is like the full moon,
we will continuously sing of the path of your glory, "long
live Vaḷavaṉ, whose sword is unfailing."[110]

(*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 393)

In this poem, the author is attempting a personal plea for the Cōḻa king to eradicate the misery from his life. In order to do this, Nalliṟaiyaṉār frames his request in an abridged poetic autobiography. The sense is that when he was in his youth he was able to provide for his wife and family by composing and singing songs. Now, as the years have passed and the sharpness of his mind has dulled, Nalliṟaiyaṉār is unable to compose pieces worthy of compensation. He has sung at houses to no avail, and slowly his means of survival have vanished. Ironically, Nalliṟaiyaṉār's imagery in the poem is quite provocative, and not at all indicative of a waning creativity.

The aesthetics of the piece frame Nalliṟaiyaṉār's use of the verb *aruḷ*. The wistful anthropomorphism of the earthen pot; the metaphor of abundant summer cotton alluding

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[110]patimutaṟ paḻakāp paḻaṅkaṇ vāḻkkaik/kuṟuneṭun tuṇaiyoṭu kūmai vītaliṟ/kuṭimuṟai pāṭi yoyyeṉ varunti/aṭaṉacai maṟantaveṅ kuḻici malarkkum/kaṭaṉṟi yāḷar piṟanāṭ ṭiṉmaiyiṉ/vaḷḷaṉ maiyiṉem varaivōr yāreṉ/uḷḷiya vuḷḷamo ṭulainacai tuṇaiyā/ulaka mellā morupāṟ paṭṭeṉ/malartā raṇṇaṉi ṉallicai yuḷḷi/īrṅkai maṟantave ṉiurmpē rokkal/kūrnta vevvamviṭak koḻuniṇaṅ kiḻippak/kōṭaip parutti vīṭuniṟai peyta/mūṭaip paṇṭa miṭai niṟain taṉṉa/veṇṇiṇa mūri yaruḷa nāḷuṟa/īṉṟa varavi ṉāvuruk kaṭukkumeṉ/ toṉṟupaṭu citā ar tuvara nīkkip/pōtuviri pakaṉṟaip putumala raṉṉa/akaṉṟumaṭi kaliṅka muṭī ic celvamum/kēṭiṉṟu nalkumati perma mācil/matipurai mākkiṇai teḷirppa veṟṟi/ātumaka ḷalku loppa vāṭik/kōṭai yāyiṉuṅ kōṭi………/kāviri purakku naṉṉāṭṭup poruna/vāyvāḷ vaḷavaṉ vāḻkeṉap/pīṭukeḻu nōṉṟāḷ pāṭukam palavē

to the condition of the meat; and the descriptions of the distress of penury all serve √*aruḷ*. The imagery is used here as a means to solicit largesse from the king. But it is more than generosity that the poet is requesting. Nalliṟaiyaṉār is petitioning the king to understand his duty as a ruler. The author compares him with rulers in other lands who do not understand their duty, and thus, are unable to act properly. The implication is that if the king's actions stem from *aruḷ*-consciousness, then he should bountifully donate for the alleviation of the poet's suffering.

The choice of the verb *aruḷ* here seems to underscore this notion. In the fourteenth line of this poem, the author uses the infinitive form of √*aruḷ* (*aruḷa*) to urge Kuḷamuṟṟattut Tuñciya Kiḻḻivaḷavaṉ to act; however, in this context it is functioning as the second person, singular, optative; not as an infinitive: 'should give,' rather than 'to give.' This is not uncommon in classical Tamil poetry. Often is the case that infinitives function in the optative sense. The reason for this is primarily metrical; but this also speaks to the poetic license of the author.

That the poet uses the infinitive form and optative sense of √*aruḷ* rather than √*ī*,[111] for example, which primarily means 'to give,' but carries the sense of a person in a higher position giving to a person in a lower station, expands the conceptual implication. As I mentioned above, √*aruḷ* has a colorful semantic range, covering a host of disparate actions; however, it lacks the specific technicality of √*ī*. In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, there is an implicit, natural hierarchy in √*aruḷ*, but unlike √*ī* the interpretation of meaning is purely context driven. Thus, the use of √*aruḷ* suggests more than just merely giving; rather, it

[111] Social relations may also be found in other forms of 'to give.' For instance, √*tā*, or its verbal noun, *tarutal*, indicates the giving between equals; √*koṭu*, or its verbal noun, *koṭuttal*, indicates a person of an inferior position giving to one in a superior position.

speaks to a more subtle comportment couched in a state of consciousness that √*ī* does not necessarily convey.

Nalliṟaiyaṉār's use of *aruḷa* in this poem underscores the king's need to be possessed of a sympathetic state of awareness. He employs the term after providing a heart wrenching description of his mental decrepitude, as well as an image of the premature fading of his young wife. He comes to the Cōḻa king because there is no one else in the land capable of demonstrating sympathy as he does. His plea is a latent attempt to blackmail the king. Nalliṟaiyaṉār is providing him the opportunity to outshine, so to speak, all the other rulers unable to demonstrate that they possess *aruḷ*. Failing to satisfy the poet's desire could have devastating effects on the legacy of the king.

After Nalliṟaiyaṉār employs √*aruḷ* in the tenth line, he then expands on his request, asking for material goods beyond the basic foodstuff required to stave off hunger. For instance, the poet desires cloth with exaggerated folds, which indicates a certain economic station—the more abundant the material, the wider the folds. What is of interest here, too, is the dichotomy of analogies Nalliṟaiyaṉār creates to describe his current wardrobe and the one he longs for. The image of the gestating serpent's tongue is creatively interesting. The bifurcation of the tongue speaks to the split and torn condition of his cloth. The image is further augmented with the fact that the snake is pregnant. The sense here is that the snake is on guard and her tongue is moving in all manner of directions. Thus, the comparison is that the clothes of the poet are torn in all manner of places. This stands in stark contrast to the image of the *pakaṇṟai* flower, the petals of which resemble pleats. The contrasting images of the serpent's tongue and the blossoming *pakaṇṟai* flower provide rich analogies; and if we read these images as more integrated into the poem as a whole, then they become symbolic of the author's plight versus the results of the king's *aruḷ*.

After the poet beseeches the king for a more refined attire, he then reiterates his requests with the use of the respectful imperative of √*nalku* (to give; to grace), *nalkumati*, in line 19: *ic celvamum/kēṭiṉṟu nalkumati* (the literal translation is, 'give wholeheartedly even this wealth'). √*Nalku* is classified as a synonym of √*aruḷ*; however, it does not have quite the same capacity. It is limited primarily to the physical act of giving, but in that act lies an intrinsic benevolent generosity, much like those actions rooted in *aruḷ*-consciousness. Nominal and verbal forms of *nalku* appear forty-one times in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*; and on four of those instances a form of *nalku* appears with *aruḷ* (*Puṟ*. 208, 361, 392, 393). This is obviously a very limited number of instances, but the term seems to be functioning in a similar manner in each poem.

√*Nalku* is being used here as a means to illuminate better the category designated by the nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ*; and therefore is subsidizing the non-martial aspects of *Caṅkam* kingship. We may glean from the last line in the poem that Nalliṟaiyaṉār's benefactor has mastered the art of war. The reference to the king's unfailing sword hints at that. The issue at hand does not revolve around the king's military prowess, though an argument could be made that they are probably interrelated. The author's motivation is to implore the king to be possessed of *aruḷ* so that the misery and poverty will be eradicated from his life. The use of √*nalku* can be seen as reinforcing this because it speaks to *aruḷ* conceptually.

The relationship between *aruḷ* and √*nalku* is further highlighted in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 208. In this poem, the author, Peruñcittiraṉār, reveals a context in which there is an instance in which a king has yet to cultivate *aruḷ*, but still exhibits a paternalistic love for his subjects. In this context, the king, Atiyamāṉ Neṭumāṉ Añci, has not consciously or unconsciously eradicated *aruḷ*. Thus, this context presents another consequence that may occur if a king acts without *aruḷ*. In this poem, the author is distraught at the fact that the

king refuses to see him, but there is no overt or implicit indication that this leads to a great sin. Instead, the poet refuses the king's generosity and ostensibly questions his fidelity to the king.

> I came, having left behind many hills
> and mountains, [to perform[112]], accept a gift and leave;
> having been respectfully generous [*nayantaruḷi*],
>   [he relayed] to me while I was standing there,
> "having accepted this, let him leave!"
> How does he know me?[113] This protector who cannot be
>   withstood.
> I am not one whose business is charity,
> who accepts something given without being seen.
> If he gave (√*nalku*) to me, having honored me, knowing my
>   depth,
> even a small seed of millet, that would be great.[114]
>
> (*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 208)

This particular poem requires a bit of contortion in the translation to arrive at the underlying gist. Much of the core context is implied, and the nuance in the language is difficult to capture in English without inserting related, explanatory words. U. V. Cāminātaiyar's commentary, however, does wonders in elucidating the situation. Peruñcittiraṉār is recounting to himself an event with Atiyamāṉ Neṭumāṉ Añci when the

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[112] 'To perform' is absent from the original text. I have inserted it in the translation because without it the poet seems to be one whose business is charity. This is not the case, as is witnessed in line 7. The context here warrants this addition, in that the poet has come to the king to be rewarded for his abilities; not for some arbitrary decision on the part of the king. The original line reads *kuṉṟu malaiyum palapiṉ ṉoḻiya/ vantaṉeṉ paricil koṇṭaṉeṉ celaṟkeṉa* (trans. I came, having left behind many hills and mountains, to accept a gift and leave). The literal English translation does not capture the spirit of what the poet is trying to convey.

[113] There is an interesting grammatical element in this question. The Tamil reads, *eṉṉai yāṅkaṟintananō*. What is of interest is the interrogative *ō* modifying *aṟintaṉaṉ*. The use of *ō* here seems not to be posing a question per se, but to be expressing regret or something lost; in essence, it appears to be underscoring the poet's disgruntled mood. The interrogative *yāṅku* (how) frames the question in the line. Thus, *ō*, which may be adding emphasis to the question posed, seems to be conveying a sense of disbelief.

[114] kuṉṟu malaiyum palapiṉ ṉoḻiya/vantaṉeṉ paricil koṇṭaṉeṉ celaṟkeṉa/niṉṟa veṉṉayan taruḷi yītukoṉ/ṭīṅkaṉañ celka tāṉēṉa vēṉṉai/yāṅkaṟin taṉṉō tāṅkaruṅ kāvalaṉ/kāṇā tītta vipporuṭ kiyāṉōr/vāṇīkap paricila ṉallēṉ pēṇit/tiṉaiyaṉait tāyiṉu miṉitavar/tuṇaiyaḷa vaṟintu nalkiṉar viṭiṉē

king offered the poet a gift without seeing him. The context of the poem takes place after Peruñcittiraṉār has been rebuffed and taken his leave without accepting the offering.

The use of √*aruḷ* in line 3 seems ironic. Peruñcittiraṉār states that the king had become 'respectfully generous' (*nayantaruḷi*) when he offered the gift. The implication here is that his seeming generosity manifested itself in his telling a royal attendant or some such figure to offer the gift to the poet and have him leave. The use of *aruḷi* here underscores both his speech and the act of offering. Peruñcittiraṉār's irony is underscored by several points within the framework of the poem. First, the conjugation of *aṟintaṉaṉ* ('know;' √*aṟi*, third person, singular, past tense) in line 5 lacks the respect that a person of the king's status should be given. The third person, singular termination '*aṉaṉ*' is less respectful than the third person, plural termination '*ār*,' which is usually reserved for personages of high caliber. '*Aṉaṉ*' can indicate an equality in social status or a certain familiarity. As will be made clear below, there is a tension between this conjugation and one that exists later in the poem. The underlying implication here is that the king was neither respectful nor generous (with the full implications of *aruḷ* in this translation) in his action. Thus, the poet refuses to offer the standard ceremonial respect to the king.

Not only does this verbal conjugation indicate a lack of reverence for the king, but it also frames the poem in a very interesting way. There are three parts to the poem. The first five lines of the poem convey what occurred in real time. Peruñcittiraṉār is mulling over the events that transpired, growing ostensibly more agitated. There is a shift in the sixth and most of the seventh lines. At this point, the author reaches an emotive crescendo when he categorically announces what sort of person he is, and not the type that the king assumes. At the end of the seventh line, Peruñcittiraṉār leads the audience through an idealized account of what would have occurred if the king possessed *aruḷ*.

It is in this third portion where we find the real substantiation for *aruḷ*'s ironic usage. Lines 7 through 9 read, '…*pēṇit/ tiṉaiyaṉait tāyiṉu miṉitavar/ tuṉaiyaḷa vaṟintu nalkiṉar viṭiṉē*' (literal trans.: if he gave, having honored [me], having known the level of [my] measurement; thus, [even] a small seed of millet [would mean] intimacy). These lines indicate the shift in Peruñcittiraṉār's mind from the real to the ideal. Not only does the use of the conditional suggest this, but also the verbal conjugation, as alluded to above. When Peruñcittiraṉār uses √*nalku* (to give) in the past tense, he conjugates it with the plural, honorific termination '*ar*;'[115] rather than with the singular termination '*aṉaṉ*.' This stands in juxtaposition to the conjugation of √*aṟi* (to know) in line 5, where Peruñcittiraṉār uses '*aṉaṉ*' in describing the king's actions. This shift towards reverence at the end of the poem indicates a move away from the "real world" where the author perceives the king as lacking *aruḷ* to an idealized world in which he possesses it.

As I mentioned above, √*nalku* is classified as a synonym of √*aruḷ*. There is a certain ironic play between the use of √*nalku* in the ninth line and the use of √*aruḷ* in the third. That Peruñcittiraṉār romanticizes a time when the king offers him a mere millet seed, but with *aruḷ* (as implied in the use of √*nalku*), this act supersedes the use of *aruḷi* in the third line. This tension makes it clear that the king was not invested with *aruḷ*-consciousness when he offered the gift to the poet. The fact that Atiyamāṉ Neṭumāṉ Añci did offer a gift, however, suggests that he is possessed of some sense of propriety regarding his relationship with the poet; however, Peruñcittiraṉār suggests that the king has yet to realize the ideal mode of proper kingship, in that his actions are not imbued with *aruḷ*. This is intimated in the creation of the idealized setting at the end of the poem. As I discussed earlier, the attainment of *aruḷ*-consciousness manifests in a king's

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[115] The more common third person, plural termination is '*ār*;' however, in poetry, often is the case that the long vowel *ā* is shortened to *a*.

interactions with his subjects on an individual level. This is an awareness that is more refined than merely behaving paternalistically in general.

Peruñcittiraṉār's idealistic situation is one that involves the king understanding and appreciating his creativity as a poet. This is made clear in the imagined succession of events that should have occurred prior to the offering of the single seed of millet. Peruñcittiraṉār wishes that the king would have honored him by taking the time to understand his intellectual and poetic depth; and from that understanding the offering would bear a different set of implications.

We witness a second ironic use of the concept *aruḷ* in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 145. It is noteworthy that this poem bears the mark of one in the *akam* genre in that the theme concerns infidelity. Paraṇar, the author, criticizes his benefactor, Vaiyāvik Kōpperum Pēkaṉ, for abandoning his spouse for another woman. Paraṇar's critique is that Pēkaṉ misunderstands the relationship between *aruḷ* and his role as a husband and, to a degree, his role as a ruler. The irony here plays out in the mingling of *puṟam* and *akam* elements as the poet ostensibly lauds Pēkaṉ's *aruḷ* for his giving a shawl to a shivering peacock, but questions him for failing to give *aruḷ* to his wife, Kaṇṇaki.[116]

> I did not come to you out of hunger or because of my
> family's poverty
> O Pēkaṉ! You [who rides a] war horse and [employs] wild
> elephants,
> whose legendary fame will not fade, who, having become
> compassionate (*aruḷ*), gave a shawl to a dark, soft peacock
> that was trembling!
> This gift I beg for is that tonight,
> having mounted your tall chariot bedecked with bells,
> remove the horrid sorrow that torments her!
> I play the small yaḻ, black like the *kaḷam* berry.
> Having made [your] subjects sway, I sing,

[116] Kaṇṇaki's name is given in the head note to the poem, not in the poem itself.

“for he who desires glory (*aruḷ*) [must] perform his duty!”[117]

(*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 145)

This poem highlights among other things the close relationship between kings and bards. Not only does the poet plead with the king for the grieving wife, but also offers Pēkaṉ several underhanded criticisms. The most obvious criticism is embedded in the last line of the poem— “for he who desires *aruḷ* [must] perform his duty!” The sense, of course, is that Pēkaṉ, though desirous of *aruḷ*, is not being dutiful (*aṟam*). Thus, he has also not obtained *aruḷ*-consciousness. If we juxtapose the connotations of this statement with the earlier usage of *aruḷ*— “…who, having become possessed of *aruḷ*, gave a shawl to a dark, soft peacock that was trembling”— we notice a disconnect, which brings to light the ironic usage of *aruḷ*. The sense is that neither the king’s infidelity nor his lack of compassion for his wife are virtuous. Similar to the other poems translated in this chapter, *Puṟ*. 145 serves as a reminder of the king’s possible infamous legacy. Being remembered as incompetent and lacking virtue in song lyrics has never been desirable. One point that underscores this opinion is Paraṇar’s oblique reference to the music lovers who sway to his music, who listen to his lyricism. It is in their memories that his lowly standing will be fixed. The verbal noun used to describe the music lovers, *tuṟaiyunar*, literally refers to those who will remain in the kingdom. Thus, the veiled threat is only amplified. That Paraṇar feels comfortable in beseeching Pēkaṉ in matters of his personal life and offhandedly instructing him how to behave is very telling.

The poem may be divided into three parts and, together, they function to motivate Pēkaṉ to change his mind about his wife. The first portion sets the stage. Paraṇar has not

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117 maṭattakai māmayil paṉikkumeṉ ṟaruḷip/paṭā a mītta keṭā a nallicaik/kaṭā a yāṉaik kalimāṉ pēka/pacittum vārēm pāramu milamē/kaḷaṅkaṉi yāṉṉa karuṅkōṭṭuc cīṟiyāḻ/nayam purin tuṟaiyunar naṭuṅkap paṇṇi/aṟañcey tīmō varuḷvey yōyeṉa/i∴tiyā miranta paricila∴ tiruḷiṉ/iṉamaṇi neṭuktē rēṟi/iṉṉā tuṟaivi yarum paṭar kaḷaimē

come for himself, but for some other reason. The second portion introduces Pēkaṉ with a series of laudatory prepositional phrases. Paraṇar is praising both his military might (war horse and wild elephants) and his generosity (giving the shawl to the trembling peacock). After establishing his benefactor's greatness, the poet transitions into the third portion of the poem when he announces his motivation for approaching Pēkaṉ. Paraṇar provides the wayward ruler with a plan of action that would mollify the heartache of his wife, Kaṇṇaki. The poet concludes the piece with a platitude on how to obtain glory or *aruḷ*—through virtuous action.

The irony in Paraṇar's two uses of *aruḷ* plays out in several ways. He claims initially that Pēkaṉ's fame is everlasting; however, the oblique instruction to behave with *aruḷ* would seem to offset the "everlasting" quality of this fame. While his military prowess may warrant memories of glory, his insensitivity and his failure to give his wife his *aruḷ* could vex his battlefield fame.

The failure of a man to give a woman his *aruḷ* signals major relationship problems in *akam* poetry. As we saw in the previous chapter, *aruḷ* appears in those *akam* poems that detail the emotional devastation its absence brings. It is rarely referred to in lyrics divorced from this context. This, in my opinion, points to *aruḷ* as an understood emotional girder for amorous relationships and, thus, it was not explicitly referred to in poems with different themes and moods.

Aruḷ is used in the *akam* anthologies in several ways. It can refer to the physical act of love making or, and most importantly, it can describe intimacy and duty. In the above scenario, Pēkaṉ has cut this affirmation to his wife. Paraṇar's two uses of *aruḷ*, therefore, are loaded with nuances from both genres. They refer both to that sympathetic awareness that a king must achieve in order to embody ideal notions of kingship and to

the emotional blessing discussed above. In the translation, however, it is difficult to capture all the adhering nuances.

The second ironic use of *aruḷ* is in the implicit juxtaposition of the peacock and Kaṇṇaki, between human subject and animal. The king has displayed his *aruḷ* by giving the shawl and, thus, comfort to the peacock. However, Pēkaṉ fails to give his *aruḷ* to his wife. We are presented here with a misguided understanding of *aruḷ*. Such ignorance would certainly have repercussions on the ways in which Pēkaṉ's subjects understood his leadership.

Pēkan's abandonment of his wife was a much discussed affair. There are seven poems (*Puṟ*. 141-147) that were composed about this incident. Of these seven, four were composed by Paraṇar (*Puṟ*. 141, 142, 144, and 145). The accompanying colophons attribute the remaining compositions to three additional authors.[118]

The central thread that unites these four poems is the references and allusions to Pēkaṉ bestowing a garment on the chilled peacock.[119] The other three poets do not mention this episode. In *Puṟ*. 141, when asked about the origin of his fine horses and splendid garlands, Paraṇar establishes that Pēkaṉ is generous because he is sympathetic to the plight of the poor, not because he wishes some better station in the next life. Thus, Paraṇar recounts the time when he gave the shawl to the cold peacock. He does not criticize Pēkaṉ here for this act, but rather uses it as an example of the ruler's generosity.

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[118] Kapilar (*Puṟ.* 143), Aricilkiḻār (*Puṟ.* 146) and Peruṅkuṉṟūkiḷār (*Puṟ*. 147).

[119] V. Narayanan argues that the majority of verses within the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* are, in fact, extracts from epic-style poems. Narayanan bases this claim on the structure of the poems, their accompanying colophons, and the commentaries referred to in the *Tolkāppiyam*, the classical text on grammar and poetics. He argues that since the text revolves mainly around a few personalities and events associated with them, then the "discrete" nature of the poems is, in fact, misleading. To account for the extraction of select verses from their longer narrative framework, Kailasapathy argues that the *Caṅkam* redactors chose a number of verses illustrating specific themes, extracted them from their larger contexts, and arranged them into their present anthology form. The eclipse of the longer narrative forms, he speculates, was due to the shifting political and socio-economic conditions of the region, the rise of gnomic literature, and the decay of the oral tradition in favor of writing. See Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry,* pp. 26-28.

In *Puṟ*. 142, however, there begins a transition away from the encomium in *Puṟ*. 141. In this poem, Paraṇar lauds his benefactor's military might, but claims that he is ignorant about how to give gifts. He does not directly refer to Pēkaṉ giving the shawl to the peacock. Thus, in order to understand what Paraṇar is alluding to, one must consider *Puṟ*. 145.

Pēkaṉ has demonstrated in the poem translated above that he is ignorant of how to give gifts. But more importantly, he has revealed that he does not possess *aruḷ* in the true sense. Paraṇar is certainly being sarcastic when he describes Pēkaṉ as possessed of *aruḷ* when he gave the shawl to the peacock. It seems to be a subtle, underhanded criticism. This poem embodies the ideals of an epigram, in that in the closing sentence there is a twisting of thought that the contents of the poem thus far were leading up to. What is of interest here and underscores the argument that the king's legacy can only be determined by his own actions is that Pēkaṉ must pay attention to the entirety of the poem. Only in realizing that the concluding line is a means to jostle his sense of what is dutiful and what is not will Pēkaṉ alter his behavior.

§ 4. *ARUḶ* BEYOND GOVERNANCE

As I mentioned in the introduction, *aruḷ* is not used consistently in each instance throughout the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. The most poignant example of *aruḷ* being used to describe something other than a king or his behavior is *Puṟ*. 256. In this poem the author is petitioning a potter to mold a funeral urn for her deceased husband.[120] After undertaking

[120] The head note to *Puṟ*. 256 is damaged and reveals very little about the poem. The identity of the poet is not known, unfortunately. George Hart and Hank Heifetz claim that the poet is actually the wife of the deceased. See Hart and Heifetz, op. cit., p 304. The commentary in the 1963 edition of U. Vē Cāminātaiyar's edited text does not mention anything about the identity of the poet being the wife of the deceased. The only clue that assists us in forming such a conclusion is the placement of the poem within the text itself. The poem is grouped among other poems composed by grieving widows. Furthermore, many of the details regarding burial practices in the classical period are not clear. Hart and Heifetz claim that it was common practice to leave the corpse in the elements so that it may be excarnated by birds (and

an arduous journey across many deserts with the corpse, the poet requests the potter to not only infuse his *aruḷ* into the funeral urn, but also impart it to her.

> O Potter who fashions vessels! O Potter who fashions
> vessels!
> Having also imparted your care (*aruḷ*) to me, who came with
> [him] across many deserts,
> like a small white lizard
> on a spoke of a cart's wheel,
> on this vast, wide and expanding earth 5
> shape a burial urn reminiscent of this place.
> O Potter who fashions vessels in Mūtūr, that
> enormous place![121]
>
> (*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 256)

Here, the anonymous poet is both physically and emotionally fatigued. The journey across many blistering hot deserts with the decomposing corpse of her husband would certainly induce both conditions. In describing herself on this journey, the poet says that she is like a small, white lizard on the spoke of a cart's wheel. This is a difficult image to place, but it seems to be referring to her state of mind: a lizard has no control over where the cart goes, but rather blindly perches, revolves, and allows the journey to unfold. It seems, though, that the author has either sought this specific potter to mold the burial urn for her husband or perhaps Mūtūr, the village in which the potter lives, was known for accommodating those skilled in the craft of pottery. Why else would one endure such a journey across many deserts with a rotting corpse? Thus, the comparison of herself to the lizard is dynamic. If we think of her simile in terms of an image in

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certainly other fauna). The bones would then be collected and placed in the burial urn. The significance between placing the urn in the ground or cremating it is unclear. It seems that both customs were observed. See Hart and Heifetz, *op. cit*., p. 297. Recent excavations in Tamilnadu have uncovered sites with burial urns. The dates of these urns, however, have not been firmly established.

[121] kalañcey kōvē kalañcey kōvē/accuṭaic cākāṭ ṭāram poruntiya/ciṟuveṇ palli pōlat taṉṉoṭu/curampala vanta vemakku maruḷi/viyaṉmala rakaṉpoḻi līmat tāḻi/akali tāka vaṇaimō/naṉantalai mūtūrk kalañcey kōvē

which life (or fate) rolls ahead without stop or sympathy, then perhaps we can understand her state of mind as being resigned to the ebb and flow of life's machinations.

Her emotional and physical exhaustion implores her to request the potter's care (*aruḷ*) not only for herself, but also for her deceased husband. This begs the question, what is *aruḷ* referring to? Does *aruḷ* in this context possess different shades of meaning depending on to whom the potter grants his *aruḷ*? In response to the latter question, it would appear that superficially it does, though underlying both is sympathy. What the poet-wife needs is outwardly different than what the dead husband needs: the deceased needs a burial urn so that he may be put to rest and she needs to either inter or cremate him. To a degree, accomplishing this task would put her mind at ease.

George Hart and Hank Heifetz, however, have speculated that the woman is requesting the potter to make the urn large enough so that she can become a *satī* and join her husband in death.[122] This speculation, however, remains just that because the head note to the poem is damaged, and therefore, we know nothing about the author or the deceased. The commentary, too, does not assist us in this regard. Their suggestion is not out of the realm of possibility, but there are other possible interpretations.

One aspect of this poem that differs from many in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is the lack of praising the hero's martial prowess and/or his generosity. One possible interpretation for her request could be that the poet-wife desires a large urn not so she can join him in death, but rather as an index to her husband's glory. This, of course, is equally as speculative as Hart and Heifetz's suggestion. In either case, it is clear that the potter is being asked to fashion an urn of unusual size. The comparison between it and the wide, expanding land suggests this; and in order to satisfy such an request the potter must

[122] A *satī* is widow who immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre so as to join him in death. See Hart and Heifetz, *op. cit*., p. 304.

possess a certain amount of sympathetic understanding for her plight and harness this when he molds the urn.

The author's request for the potter to manifest his *aruḷ* through the clay is not explicit in the poem. She implies this in the request for him to give her his *aruḷ* also. It is the 'also' here that suggests this. If my reading is correct, then it underscores the importance of sympathetic intention in action. This corresponds neatly to the conceptual underpinnings of *aruḷ* in the verses translated above. In this context, however, the person who possesses *aruḷ* is not a king, but a member of the *kuyam* (potter) caste. He is the one who can eradicate her misery and comfort her through molding an enormous burial urn.

The author understands this and beseeches the potter to undertake such a task. She uses an interesting epithet, *kōvē*, in the opening line of the poem to refer to the potter. *Kōvē* is the vocative declension of the noun *kō*, which refers primarily to a king, but also indicates a great person, a father, or a potter. The most common usage of *kō* in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is to refer to a king. Apart from this poem, *kō* is used to refer to a potter in only one other poem in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (*Puṟ*. 228). One would suspect that the usage of *kō* over the more common term, *kuyavaṉ* (potter), was intentional, employed because it resonates with a more regal tenor, much like a person appealing to a king.

In this context, *aruḷ* carries much of the same weight as it does in the poems discussed above. The woman is seemingly helpless to fashion a burial urn for her husband by herself. She approaches the potter for relief of her plight and beseeches him to undertake her request. Whether or not she wishes to join her husband in death is inconsequential. Either way, it is the potter, once possessed of *aruḷ*, who can end the suffering and torment that has overcome her.

§ 5. CONCLUSION

An analysis of all the contexts in which the nominal and/or the verbal forms appear suggests several related points regarding *aruḷ*-consciousness. First, the concept *aruḷ* intimates a type of non-romantic love. This love may be compared with the love a parent has for a child. In the context of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the king must behave towards each subject individually as if he or she were his progeny. George Hart and Hank Heifetz suggest that *aruḷ* signifies the disinterested love that an ascetic has for everyone.[123] As we saw in the previous chapter, there is an instance in which *aruḷ* indicates this disposition (*Aka*. 53);[124] but in the case of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, however, this seems inappropriate. The poets do not use *aruḷ* to convey a state of disinterest or objectivity. On the contrary, they use *aruḷ* to designate the ways in which a king interacts with specific individuals.

The poets also suggest a hierarchical relationship between *aruḷ* and other categories of love, with *aruḷ* positioned at the pinnacle. This claim is based on an analysis of those poems in which nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* are juxtaposed with other technical terms that bear a close relationship in meaning, such as *aṉpu* or √*naya* (relational love). Further to this point, the king must pass through the lower rungs on the hierarchy in order to attain *aruḷ*-consciousness. Undertaking such a journey is not a passive procedure, but requires conscious effort. The king must first embody a general form of non-romantic love for his subjects. This may be compared to the feeling one has for one's family members or friends. Only once the king possesses such feeling for all things in his domain can he then begin to cultivate *aruḷ*-consciousness and treat each subject like his child. I have found no instance in the text where a king possesses *aruḷ*

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[123] See, George Hart and Hank Heifetz, *op. cit.,* p. 269, note to poem 92.
[124] See pg. 68.

but does not possess this relational love. There are references, however, to kings possessed of this relational love but lacking *aruḷ*. The context of such descriptions insinuates that a king has yet to realize this ideal of kingship.

Once a king actualizes the paradigm, however, he must strive to preserve *aruḷ*-consciousness. Attainment does not guarantee that one will always enjoy this state of consciousness. There is always the potential that a king will fall. When a king's actions are no longer based in *aruḷ*-consciousness, he may receive ever-lasting perdition. This points to several matters of interest. First, there is a presupposed cosmology. As George Hart has pointed out, the *caṅkam* kings were thought to hold sway over natural forces. They were perceived as operating within the larger cosmos, manipulating the elements for the benefit of the kingdom. It was believed that if a king fell short in his responsibilities, leaving his realm bereft of proper leadership, or if he failed in his military campaigns, the kingdom, then, would fall into disarray.[125]

One aspect that Hart does not highlight is the consequence for the king if his kingdom descends into chaos. Some of the poems suggest cosmological retribution; while others imply social consequences, such as subjects losing their fidelity. The difficulty about speaking of cosmology in the *caṅkam* context is that there is no systematized structure to the universe. It is clear, however, that the poets' compositions bear in mind some structure; but it seems too that the poets had competing ideas about the organization of the universe, particularly regarding the king's position within the cosmos. For instance, some of the poets place emphasis on the king's ability to wage and emerge victorious in warfare as a means of maintaining harmony; others take the position that his benevolence and interaction with his subjects is his most important quality. Whichever

[125] George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, pp. 13-14.

the case may be, it is clear that the king was considered different from the average citizen, in that he was endowed with the gift of certain powers that ensured the harvest or caused the rain to fall. Without knowledge of the specifics, however, it is difficult to put in print any sort of axioms regarding the cosmological nature of kingship.

Furthermore, that the poets are petitioning their benefactors to exercise *aruḷ* suggests that they did not consider them to have attained *aruḷ*-consciousness. In fact, due to the nature of the poems, there are no kings mentioned in the text who have attained this perfection. Otherwise, I suppose, the poets would not be petitioning them to exercise *aruḷ*; they just would. These appeals, then, underscore the archetypal nature of the concept. But to the poets who frame their poems around this term, *aruḷ* signifies the pinnacle of perfected kingship. It is precisely this state of consciousness that informs his morality and ethics, either positively or negatively. These poets are only ostensibly interested in other characteristics of kingship, such as military prowess or the symbols that legitimate a king's rule. If a king lacks *aruḷ*, then he has failed not only his kingdom and himself, but also the ideal of kingship. Such a failure brings the wrath of the greatest sin and inhibits his immortality. As we turn our attention to the Śaiva literature, specifically Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*, the poetics from both *akam* and *puṟam* genres should be kept in mind.

PART TWO —UNRAVELING GRACE: *ARUḶ* IN MĀṆIKKAVĀCAKAR'S *TIRUVĀCAKAM*

Māṇikkavācakar (ca. ninth century CE) is one of the most prominent figures in Tamil Śaivism. His position as one of the four principal Śaiva *nāyaṉmār* (poet-saints) is well established within the tradition and community, the other three being Tirunāvukkaracar (ca. 580-661 CE), Tiruñāṉacampantar (ca. 639-655 CE), and Cuntaramūrtti (ca. late seventh CE). Māṇikkavācakar's works, the *Tiruvācakam* and the *Tirukōvaiyār*, occupy the eighth book of the Tamil Śaiva canon, the *Tirumuṟai* ("Sacred Book"). The *Tirumuṟai* consists of twelve books; the first seven books, collectively titled the *Tēvāram*, are ascribed to the three *nāyaṉmār* mentioned above.[126] Māṇikkavācakar's seminal work, the *Tiruvācakam*, is widely known across Tamilnadu as a text of resplendent lyricism and penetrating devotion (*bhakti*). In fact, there is a well known adage that refers to the profundity of the *Tiruvācakam*—*Tiruvācakattukku urukātār oru vācakattukkum urukār* (trans. "he who does not melt for the *Tiruvācakam* does not melt for even one word"). In other words, the emotional passion and spiritual power of the *Tiruvācakam* will soften any who listen.

Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* is still a living text. I describe it as 'living' because it continues to enjoy a prominent place in temple worship and ritual, particularly at Citamparam (Tillai), the Śaiva temple that houses the image of Śiva Naṭarājaṉ (Lord of Dance). Citamparam is widely regarded as the center of the Śaiva universe. It is believed that it was at this temple, near the Bay of Bengal on the eastern coast of India, where Māṇikkavācakar composed half of the fifty-one hymns in the *Tiruvācakam* and where he undertook his final act—merging with the central image of Śiva Naṭarājaṉ in the

[126] For a detailed outline of the canonized Śaiva authors and their place in the *Tirumuṟai*, see K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, p. 136.

garbhagṛha (inner sanctum); and it is at this temple where, upon circumambulating the temple tank, one would have walked past the entire fifty-one hymns of the *Tiruvācakam* incised on the surrounding walls. The *Tiruvācakam*, however, is not only celebrated at Citamparam, but also in the many Śaiva temples and shrines that populate the Tamil countryside.

Indira Peterson's research on the *ōtuvār* ("one who chants or sings") details how the hymns from the *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* still play a decisive role in Tamil Śaiva worship and identity. Although the institution of the *ōtuvār* is in danger of extinction, to this day the singers still perform hymns from the *Tirumuṟai* at the close of daily *pūjā* (worship) in Tamil Śaiva places of worship. As Peterson points out, "to the Tamil Śaiva worshippers…the part played by these hymns in ritual is a point of great doctrinal significance, legitimizing and confirming their belief that Śiva loves the offering of Tamil song equally with the Sanskrit mantras."[127] Thus, in singing hymns from the *Tirumuṟai* there is a special pride given to the *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* .[128] Moreover, while I was living in Chennai, Tamilnadu during 2003-2004, I was surprised to find no less than three monthly announcements in the local newspapers advertising lectures on the *Tiruvācakam*; during some months there were two or three such announcements per week, published and patronized by different groups. In this way is the *Tiruvācakam* still a text very much alive.

§ 1. MĀṆIKKAVĀCAKAR'S LEGACY AND HAGIOGRAPHY

The reverence that contemporary Tamil Śaivas hold for Māṇikkavācakar has been cultivated and passed down through generations; his importance as a saint was first glorified during the Cōḻa regnum (ca. 850-1200 CE). The Cōḻa kings utilized motifs and

[127] Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, p. 55.
[128] *Ibid*., pp. 51-60. For a more in-depth discussion of the institution of the *ōtuvār*, see chapater 4.

narratives of Māṇikkavācakar and other *nāyanmār* as a means to to enhance their religious status, which, in turn, benefited their political status. This is witnessed in the festivals associated with the temple at Citamparam, particularly the Tiruvāturai festival, which has its antecedents during the Cōḻa period.

As Paul Younger describes, the ten-day Tiruvāturai festival, held in the month of Mārkaḻi (December-January), which is considered the "great" festival of Citamparam, incorporates the singing of the "Tiruvempāvai," one of Māṇikkavācakar's most well known hymns, and the use of his image in the morning processions and evening worship. The roots of the Tiruvāturai festival are believed to belong to a fertility rite that predates temple Hinduism, and ritual bathing is the central feature. There is an excitement associated with this bathing, as Younger indicates, because the festival occurs during the coldest month of the year. Not only are images bathed, but women and girls also bathe themselves in streams and creeks during the early morning hours. [129] During the early morning procession on days two through eight of the festival, an image of Māṇikkavācakar is carried backwards in front of the images of the central deities (Śiva and the Goddess), providing the paradigmatic model of devotion. [130]

The "Tiruvempāvai,"[131] the seventh hymn in the *Tiruvācakam*, is recited and sung in the evening on the second through eighth day. In preparation for the singing, the *ōtuvār* undergoes rituals that transform him into a personification of Māṇikkavācakar.[132] The *ōtuvār* sings the first verse as Brahman and Vēḷāḷa women read the hymn aloud. During the recitation of the "Tiruvempāvai," an image of Māṇikkavācakar is brought

[129] Paul Younger, *The Home of Dancing Śivaṉ*, pp. 54-58.
[130] Paul Younger, *Playing Host to Deity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 154.
[131] The *Tiruvempāvai* is believed to have been composed expressly for the purpose of this festival. See G. U. Pope, pp. 103-104.
[132] Paul Younger, *Playing Host to Deity*, p. 154.

before the image of Śiva Naṭarājaṉ. The image of the saint is placed in a position, in front of a throng of several thousand devotees, from where Māṇikkavācakar can have *darśan* ("auspicious seeing") with Śiva. As each verse of the hymn concludes, bells are rung and lamps are waved so that Māṇikkavācakar can "see" the central image. When the hymn has been recited, worship shifts from Śiva to the image of Māṇikkavācakar.[133] As Younger recounts, the *ōtuvār*, who has become a personification of Māṇikkavācakar, and the image of Māṇikkavācakar himself enter the inner sanctum; Śiva then honors them with food and garlands;[134] bells again ring and the lamp is waved, but this time in front of Māṇikkavācakar's image, and the throngs of people worship him.[135]

The Tiruvāturai festival at Citamparam, particularly the activities on days two through nine, dates to the Cōḻa regnum.[136] The Cōḻas designated the Citamparam temple as their family temple and put much energy and wealth in establishing it as the preeminent Śaiva temple in the Tamil lands.[137] This fact highlights the ways in which royal power, particularly the Cōḻas in this instance, capitalized on popular motifs and narratives to enhance their religious status, which in turn benefited their political status. Several Cōḻa temple inscriptions dating to the eleventh and twelfth century also document the recitation of several prominent hymns from the *Tiruvācakam*, most notably the "Tiruvempāvai," which was mentioned above, and the "Tiruccāḻal."[138] There is also a twelfth-century Cōḻa inscription that documents a temple setting aside land for *pūjā* for

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[133] Paul Younger, *Home of the Dancing Śivaṉ*, pp. 55-59.
[134] Paul Younger, *Playing Host to Deity*, p. 154.
[135] Paul Younger, *Home of the Dancing Śivaṉ*, p. 58.
[136] Paul Younger, *Home of the Dancing Śivaṉ*, p. 59.
[137] Paul Younger offers a concise history of the Cōḻas identifying their family lineage with the Citamparam temple; see *Home of the Dancing Śivaṉ*, pp. 92-94; 131-142.
[138] The "Tiruccāḻal" is an interesting hymn, quite unlike the majority of hymns in the *Tiruvācakam*. In each verse there is a question and answer. The first two lines relay some mystery of Śiva and the latter two lines are the reply. As G. U. Pope points out, in recitation, the first couplet is sung by a leader and the reply is sung in chorus by girls, with much clapping of hands. See G. U. Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.

Māṇikkavācakar and two other *nāyaṉmār*.[139] The Cōḻa monarchy was eager to capitalize on Māṇikkavācakar's legacy, and they promoted his devotion, making him an exemplar for the larger Tamil Śaiva community, and this is evidenced not only in inscription, but also in imagery and hagiography.

Beginning perhaps in the twelfth century and continuing until the fifteenth century, hagiographies about Māṇikkvācakar's life were composed. There are two primary sources that convey the life of the poet: the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* and the *Tiruvātavūrar Purāṇam*. The latter is assigned to the fifteenth century and solely recounts Māṇikkavācakar's life. The former text exists in three versions, the earliest probably dating to the twelfth century; and Parañcōti's famous version (third) dates somewhere between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[140]

Historians have tended to shy away from hagiographies, as they were considered to bear marks of excessive imagination. Depictions of supernatural feats, images of the fantastic, and anachronistic events were cataloged as untruthful, and therefore, negated the historical relevance of hagiography.[141] In discussing Māṇikkavācakar's hagiography as recounted in the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam*, G. U. Pope describes it as "utterly unhistorical…[and] full of the most extraordinary stories, from which it is well-nigh impossible to sift out any grains of historical truth."[142]

It is true that hagiographies often eschew the chronological approach to history and tend to aggrandize biographical data. Despite this, hagiographies do provide

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[139] K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, p. 143, fn. 92.
[140] *Ibid.*, pp. 56;178.
[141] Jonathan Walters discusses this scholarly prejudice in, "*Stūpa*, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 163-164. Although Walters couches his discussion in the history of Pāli studies, I believe his observation concerning prejudices about hagiography is relevant to other areas of Indology.
[142] G. U. Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. xvii-xviii.

thematic or conceptual relationships between elements internal and external to the narrative. From this perspective, hagiographies are caught in a larger web of discourse with other texts, artifacts, art, architecture, epigraphy, and so forth. Hagiographies are products of political and religious contexts; and they provide unique insight into the confluence of events and factors that prompted their composition.

As Dennis Hudson points out, by the ninth century CE, narratives of the *nāyaṉmār* were beginning to appear in artwork on both the Pallava and Cōḻa temples, and these visual narratives pre-date the composition of the *Periya Purāṇam* (ca. 1135 CE), the hagiographical account of the sixty-three *nāyaṉmār*.[143] As I discuss below, for reasons unknown, Māṇikkavācakar was not included in this list of saints and therefore his hagiography does not appear in the *Periya Purāṇam*; however, the real significance is that these narratives appeared in sculpture before they appeared in writing. In addition to carvings, images of the *nāyanmār* were also cast in bronze, some of which were immoveable and others that were moveable; and the latter were integrated into the major festivals at Śaiva temples. If we recall the Tiruvāturai festival, an image of Māṇikkavācakar was carried backwards in front of the central deities in procession; his image was given *darśan* with Śiva Naṭarāja; and the throngs of devotees also worshipped his image. There is also a permanent image of Māṇikkavācakar that resides in a subsidiary shrine near the *garbagṛha*.

I do not look to Māṇikkavācakar's hagiography with an eye for historical detail; however, I do find the concerns of the Śaiva community present in his tale. It documents why the Śaiva tradition exemplified him as a devotee for the wider community. I have

[143] D. Dennis Hudson, "Violent and Fanatical Devotion Among the Nāyanārs: A Study in the *Periya Purāṇam* of Cēkkilār," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 373-374.

translated one of Māṇikkavācakar's hagiographies from the *Tiruviḷaiyātal Purāṇam* (c.1250 CE). I have chosen this particular story because it is solely concerned with Māṇikkaväckar's conversion to Śaivism. Let us turn now to the fifty-eighth chapter of the *Tiruviḷaiyātal Puraṇam*, the "Vātavūrkaḷukku Upatēcitta Paṭalam" or the "Chapter of Vātavūrar's (Māṇikkavācakar's) Initiation." In this narrative, Māṇikkavācakar is initially refered to as "Tiruvātavūrār" or "He of sacred Vātavūr:" Vātavūr is the village where he was born. He earns his name Māṇikkavācakar ("He whose utterances are rubies") after spontaneously singing for Śiva. The naming indicates his initiation into the Śaiva fold.

> Tiruvātavūrār (Māṇikkavācakar) was born in an ancestral line of king's ministers in the sacred town called Vātavūr on the banks of the Vaikai River.
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> Tiruvātavūrār grew up like Cantiraṉ, the new moon. By his sixteenth year he was well-versed, having studied all the sixty-four arts. [King] Arimarttaṉa Pāṇṭiyaṉ, having heard of his erudition and excellent character, prepared him on the path to become his minister. During his rule, Buddhism and Jainism came, spreading throughout the Tamil region. Tiruvātavūrār had the desire, for the purpose of wisdom, to study the system of the *Śaivāgamas* through a spiritual preceptor; but he had agreed to be a minister, the eyes and soul of the king.
>
> One day, while Arimarttaṉa Pāṇṭiyaṉ was sitting majestically in his hall with his ministers, the guards protecting the horses quickly approached and said with regret, "Many horses were swept away in the flooding Vaikai river. The few horses remaining are sick and old. There are no good horses in our kingdom!"
>
> Immediately, the king turned to Tiruvātavūrār and commanded, "You must quickly take the amount of gold necessary from our treasury and leave. When you arrive at our coast line, examine and select the best horses on the ships, purchase them, and return." Tiruvātavūrār did as the king commanded and, having taken leave from him, set out to purchase the horses.
>
> Onto camels' backs he hoisted the satchels of gold taken from the treasury. He went as far as the Mīṉāṭci temple and dipped in the temple tank. Having ritually bathed in the water, he then beheld (*darśan*) Alavāyaṇṇal (Śiva) and requested, "Great Dancer in the silver shrine! Bless all of this wealth so that it may be useful to You and the devotees with their five senses controlled who desire to worship You." God, taking the form of an old Śaiva, gave sacred ash to the devotee from sacred Vātavūr. Afterwards, having gone to Tirupperunturai, [Śiva] manifested

with his disciples beneath a *kurunta* tree. In Tirupperunturai, Tiruvātavūrār approached the spot where Śivaperumāṉ, who had become his spiritual preceptor, was majestically seated in a meditative state at the foot of the tree, and who held in his sacred hand a manuscript on the wisdom of Śiva. He worshipped Him. Śivaperumāṉ enslaved him with proper knowledge. Afterwards, he composed a beautiful garland of verse, strung together with love and grace, compiled with faultless and beautiful words like rubies. Having offered it to Śiva, He blessed the joyous true devotee with the sacred name Māṇikkavācakar.

Śivaperumaṉ, the spiritual preceptor of his slaves, having proclaimed to Māṇikkavācakar, "there are some important services to do here, you must stay here for some more time," disappeared. Māṇikkavācakar had reached *mukti* (liberation); and having triumphed in debate, he refuted the argument of the Buddhists. Afterwards, Arimarttaṉa Pāṇṭiyaṉ heard of his importance.

Tiruvātavūrār, having obtained the name Māṇikkavācakar, spent all the gold that was for purchasing horses for the Pāṇṭiyaṉ king on services to the deity, religious festivals, and the devotees at Perumaṉ's temple. Later, while coming from Tirupperunturai, the king's servants, looking for Tiruvātavūrār, came [to him]. Tiruvātavūrār dismissed them, having said, "the herd of horses will arrive at the sea coast during the month of Āṭi. You must immediately inform the Pāṇṭiyaṉ king."

The month of Āṭi came. The king sent a message inscribed on a palm leaf— "why have the horses not come?" Tiruvātavūrār, having read the king's palm leaf message, went to the temple. He appealed, with tears swelling in his eyes, "O my King Who manifested in Tirupperunturai! All of the Pāṇṭiyaṉ's wealth is yours. Did you not give me the heart to donate for the service of the temple? How will I purchase and give horses to the king now? With what money will I buy them?"

Then, Śivaperumaṉ, who manifested in Tirupperunturai, said, "write and send a message that all the horses mentioned previously will arrive." Accordingly, Tiruvātavūrār sent a message on a palm leaf to the king. The king, who saw the message, was very happy; and he waited anxiously, expecting the arrival of the horses.

One night, in Māṇikkavācakar's dream, Sōmasuntarar (Śiva), appearing at the base of the *kurunta* tree, possessed of beautiful form, tranquil, and as a spiritual preceptor, explained, "to attract the heart of the king, I will come with purchased horses that will gain victory. Today you go first!" Māṇikkavācakar felt that what he recognized in dream was true. Having gone to the temple in Tirupperunturai, he worshipped god; and after arriving in Maturai, he went to the king.

The king asked Māṇikkavāckar, "how much pure gold did you take? How many horses did you buy?" "O king, I took an immeasurable amount of gold; and using

that, an inestimable number of horses were purchased. Those horses are coming later." The king proclaimed, "because of this, you are 'Durgapati,' one who is able to achieve anything; having obtained this name your popularity will flourish." The king, having heard of the horses, was very happy, and giving him many rich presents, he sent Tiruvātavūrār to the palace. Māṇikkavācakar went to the temple in Maturai and stood in God's presence and worried, "O Perumāṉ, who enslaved me! Having accepted all of the Pāṇṭiyaṉ king's wealth, you graciously accepted me as a slave into your service. So that Pāṇṭiyāṉ will not be angry, how will I take all of the horses and return? I do not know!"

As a reply to that a powerful, echoing voice said, "You are a true man! Have no fear! To the extent that you desire, I will come with many fine horses like those that pull the sun's chariot." Having heard this, Tiruvātavūrār was happy and went to the palace.

While he neared his palace, he was approached by his family, friends, dedicated servants, and neighbors. All of them asked many types of questions, "O Lord, if you are the king's minister, you must thus behave accordingly. You know everything, we can tell you nothing. Even then, you do not know that the work you are doing is not proper. You certainly said, 'the horses will come today.' Accordingly, if the horses do not come today, what good answer will you give to the king?" Tiruvātavūrar listened to them all and said, "Civapermān is my guru, my mother, and my father! I have no desire for women. My kin has many customs, too. My kin is all the Śavia slaves. I have no affliction other than the distress from birth. In villages, people cook food for me. My bed is the entire earth. My dress is like His frayed cloth.

"My jewels are the *uttirāṭcam* beads and sacred ash. Having adopted this position, I cling to nothing. For me there is no worry. If the king chastises or supports me with love, it is one and the same.

"Even then, in any condition, I will not neglect God. In this vast world there are no good men who can avoid consequences brought on by previous actions; if they come I will accept them." Having proclaimed this, he gave leave to the congregation and was peaceful in the palace.

As I mentioned above, I do not look for historical details within this biography. I do see, however, the concerns of the Śaiva community in which the story emerged. Māṇikkavācakar was born in the town of Vātavūr, on the banks of the Vaikai River. The author is eager to depict the period in which he grew up as one in which Buddhism and Jainism flourished. Māṇikkavācakar is painted as an erudite boy whose intellect attracted

the notice of the king Arimarttaṉa Pāṇṭiyaṉ. He is described as having an interest in the *śaivāgamas*. As I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter, it is very difficult to know if Māṇikkavācakar actually studied these liturgical texts. He does mention them several times, but that does not necessarily suggest that he was aware of the contents. I do think that he was; however, this is speculation. Nevertheless, the significance here is aligning him with the larger Śaiva Siddhānta tradition—they are the guardians of these texts; and the Tamil Siddhāntins were keen on placing Māṇikkavācakar and the other *nāyaṉmār* at the front of their lineage.[144]

Māṇikkavācakar, though interested in studying Śaiva theology, agrees to become a minister to the king. After his induction into the royal court, the Vaikai River flooded, and many of the king's horses were swept away in the water of the flooding Vaikai River. Māṇikkavācakar was given the task of traveling to the coast and purchasing more horse—his conversion to Śaivism occured on this trip. Rather than use the money to buy the horses, Māṇikkavācakar donated it all to Śiva and the Śaiva devotees. Śiva then begins to manifest. First, he appears as an aged Śaiva who gives the sacred ash to Māṇikkavācakar; second, he manifests as a guru beneath a tree. It is under that particular tree that Māṇikkavācakar was inducted into Śaivism. He sang a hymn and was given the name "Māṇikkavācakar" afterwards. The text then tells us that he obtained liberation *and* bested the Buddhists in debate. The king heard of his victory and importance as a Śaiva.

As the text tells us, Māṇikkavācakar was forced to lie to the king about the horses. As Māṇikkavācakar continues to postpone telling the king the truth, he grows increasingly worried. He beseeched Śiva to come to his aid. In a dream, Śiva told him not to worry, that he will bring horses. Māṇikkavācakar then tells the king that the horses

[144] See Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, pp 134-141.

will arrive soon. The king was elated with the news of their arrival and rewarded the minister. Māṇikkavācakar went the Mīṉāṭci temple in Maturai and again implored Śiva for help. Śiva spoke to him and told him that he should not have any fear. His anxiety abates and he returns to his palace. On the way, he is stopped by his family and friends. They question his judgment and express concern. He basically informs them that his only concern is Śiva and the Śaiva path. The tale concludes with him sitting peacefully in the palace.

It is clear that the author of this piece painted Māṇikkvācakar with a very devotional stance. The underlying issues are: Śiva will answer one's prayers; the *śaivāgamas* are touted as superior; one should donate money for the upkeep of temples, for devotees, and for festivals; one should not have concern for earthly rulers; Śiva will protect his devotees; one should adopt the Śaivas as family, relinquishing ties to one's biological family and friends; earthly liberation is possible; Buddhism is inferior; it details the marks of a Śaiva; emphasizes the loss of desire; tranquility comes when one places one's life in Śiva's hands: anxiety and worry resides with those who are not faithful; judging the words of people as irrelevant; poverty over wealth; subsisting on begging; wandering the whole of the sacred earth; and concern for one's well-being happens before one truly believes in Śiva. In other words, threat of punishment should not deter one from his or her beliefs.

What is interesting is that the some of concerns of the author of this story are not necessarily the same ones expressed in the *Tiruvācakam*. The image of the poet here is of one who has a trenchant theological stance and steadfast belief in Śaivism. At the conclusion, he is almost stoic. The *Tiruvācakam* gives a different sort of image. Māṇikkavācakar is indeed steadfast in his belief, but he is not stoic by any means. In fact, he is the opposite of stoic; he gushes with emotion, demonstrating almost violent

mood swings. The author even places the words, “I have no desire for women” in Māṇikkavācakar’s mouth. As you will plainly see in the following chapter, he writes about women frequently; sometimes he gives into temptation and other times he does not. He is thus forced to question the relationship Śiva may have with him.

These few examples highlight the difference between the contents in the *Tiruvācakam* and hagiographical persona. This does not undermine the above story of Māṇikkavācakar’s conversion. As I mentioned, I do not read this with a historical eye. What it does provide is an example of an ideal devotee who gave up a powerful position under a king to follow Śiva. The hagiography exemplifies certain qualities that the members of the Śaiva community should adopt, and above all, it reinforces Śiva as a protecting and loving deity. In short, it demonstrates that the concerns of individuals and the community will be addressed.

§ 2. AUTHORSHIP AND THE TEXT

There is little doubt that Māṇikkavācakar was an actual person. What is in doubt, however, is the authorship of the fifty-one hymns in the *Tiruvācakam*. Tradition assigns all compositions within the text to Māṇikkavācakar; however, G. U. Pope (1900) conjectured that three hymns in the *Tiruvācakam* were not his compositions: the celebrated, inaugural hymn, the “Civapurāṇam;” “Pōṟṟi Tirvakaval,” the third hymn; and the thirty-sixth hymn, “Tiruppāṇṭi Patikam.”[145] Pope was the most hesitant about suggesting outside authorship for the latter hymn. He speculated a late composition based on his reading of a developed Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy in the contents of the hymn,[146] but Māṇikkavācakar was familiar with Śaiva philosophy: his mention of Śiva

[145] G. U. Pope, *op.cit*, pp. 1, 30, 287
[146] *Ibid*., p. 287.

revealing *āgamic* literature attests to this knowledge. I will return to this in the following chapter.

The opening hymn, the "Civapurāṇam," is one of his most widely celebrated hymns among Tamil Śaivas. Pope suggests that the "Civapurāṇam" was too technically complete to be among Māṇikkavācakar's compositions, and that it was inserted into the *Tiruvācakam* when the text was compiled.[147] For the fourth hymn, "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval," Pope merely states that he sensed Umāpati, the Tamil Siddhāntin author of the *Tiruvaruṭpayan̲* (ca. fourteenth century CE), composed it.[148] This was an intuition on part of the translator that is also very difficult to corroborate. Two scholars who have written extensively on Māṇikkavācakar, Glenn Yocum and Ratna Navratnam,[149] do not enter the debate at all. They assume, as do I, that the text was composed by a single author. There is no evidence at present to assume that Māṇikkavācakar did not compose each hymn, making it very difficult to make any authoritative claim regarding this debate.

Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* consists of fifty-one hymns; the longest hymn has four hundred lines and the shortest has eight lines. The structure of the hymns is not uniform. While the majority of hymns are arranged in stanzas, the first four are not. They were composed in the fashion of a narrative. There are four meters used within the text: *veṇpa*, *kalippā*, *āciriyappā* or *akaval*, and *viruttam*. As Yocum rightly points out, the majority of these, save for *viruttam*, are prominently used in *caṅkam* poetry. The language of the *Tiuvācakam* is quite different from what is found in the *caṅkam* anthologies. For one, there is a considerable amount of Sanskrit loan words present in

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147 *Ibid*., p. 1.
148 *Ibid*., p. 30.
149 Ratna Navaratnam, *A New Approach to Tiruvasagam*.

the text. Yocum postulates that fourteen percent of the language in the *Tiruvācakam* derives from Sanskrit.[150]

The hymns are not arranged chronologically. There have been attempts to recreate the order of compositions, but this is conjecture.[151] I agree with Yocum when he argues against modern interpreters who claim that the order of the hymns is representative of Māṇikkavācakar's mystical ascent. As Yocum correctly points out, the themes at the beginning of the text are present at the end of the text.[152] G. Vanmikanathan, for instance, divides the text into four categories: prologue (1-4), purgation (5-6), illumination (7-22), and union (23-51).[153] Vanmikanathan's suggestion, while thoughtful, is idealistic. He seems to ignore considerable thematic content. For example, one of the more interesting and common topics in the text is overcoming temptation. Māṇikkavācakar, it seems, was particularly fond of women, and frequently describes himself as either succumbing to or surmounting temptation, and Māṇikkavācakar refers to battling this weakness in the fortieth hymn, which clearly falls in Vanmikanathan's ultimate category of 'union.' I do see ideas regarding the latter three categories operating within the text; however, I do not see the text as arranged in such an order.

In fact, I believe it is difficult to uncover the logic behind the compilation of the text on the whole at present. Yocum suggests that there is a grouping of hymns (7-19) that have a very similar subject matter: they were intended to be sung by women while undertaking domestic duties.[154] While some of these hymns are candidly associated with

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[150] Glenn Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Siva*, p. 55.
[151] Ratna Navaratnam *A New Approach to Tiruvasagam* (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1957).
[152] Glenn Yocum, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[153] G. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through Tamil Literature*, pp. xii-xxiii.
[154] Glenn Yocum, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-59.

women, I think that Yocum overstates his position here. Five of these hymns (10, 11,13-15) bear the mark of Māṇikkavācakar's autobiographical style, in which he discusses his own trials and tribulations. The tenth hymn, the"Tirukkōttumpī" ("Sacred Dragonfly"), in particular, which I provide a sample of in the following chapter, is not ambigious in regard to the identity of the narrator. As the title tells us, Māṇikkavācakar uses a 'go-between' (the dragonfly) to send a message to Śiva. While the use of the go-between in *akam* poetry is most frequently associated with women, this does not necessarily position the narrator as a woman. While Yocum correctly asserts that some of the hymns between 7 and 19 were to be sung by women, a little more than half the number is not.

A portion of the other hymns in the text may have been arranged based on length. There is uniformity between hymns seventeen and forty-three, save for three, in that they all have ten stanzas with four lines each. The hymns surrounding this group are not uniform in structure or length—some use stanzas; others do not, and the lines run from four hundred to eight.

Unfortunately, little is known about the redaction of the text. Many of the details that drive a researcher's curiosity are not visible, and will remain as such until a deeper probe into the text and the material circumstances surrounding its production is undertaken. We can say something about the date of the author, however. While this has been hotly contested, hopefully I will shed further light on the subject, helping to put the argument to rest.

§ 3. DATING MĀṆIKKAVĀCAKAR

The dating of Māṇikkavācakar has been a controversial affair. While his date is largely conjecture, the current consensus assigns him to the mid-ninth century of the Common Era. Some scholars, however, have placed him later than this, between the tenth and eleventh centuries; others situate him much earlier than this, somewhere in the

fourth or fifth century CE;[155] and some do not enter the debate at all, focusing instead on issues of mysticism and spiritual expression.[156]

The central problem with dating Māṇikkavācakar is that all evidence comes from literary sources. Historians have criticized (and rightly so) the emphasis given to textual traditions over material records in reconstructing an historical image. As Cynthia Talbot argues, literary sources do not record specific contexts of time and place in the way that, say, inscriptions do.[157] Epigraphy, however, is literature, albeit of a somewhat different sort. They indeed record donors' transactions and provide evidence for social networks, but some of the elements of inscriptions are fanciful. The *praśasti* (eulogy), for instance, that opens many inscriptions is replete with fantastic tales of origins and exploits of the ruler or gods. While this information may be useful in piecing together a historical record or understanding literary modus operandi, as a genre it should be categorized as what historians label as 'literary.' The question, then, is what differentiates the transitions between literary and the historical? May the same approach not be applied to literary texts? In characterizing the medieval Kakatiya political network in Andhra Pradesh, for instance, Talbot translates the *praśasti* of an inscription:

> When the thundering of the war-drums of his victorious army on the march pervaded the far corners, it was as if the echoes reverberating off the towering houses of his enemies were telling them, "Escape to the forest quickly, for King Ganapati, master in the battlefield, is approaching!"
>
> Held up high on tall poles and wavering vigorously in the wind, his army's battle colors seem to signal to the many rival kings from a distance with the threat, "Run far away at once!"

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155 See Glenn Yocum, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

156 Radha Thiagarajan, *A Study of Mysticism in Tiruvacākam* [sic] (Madurai: Madurai Kamraj University, 1983).

157 Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice—Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.12-13.

> When the rays of the sun's light had been totally extinguished by the clouds of dust that rose up from the ground as the rows of sharp hooves of his throngs of horses tore it asunder, the astonished people thought the sun had gone away, observing the frightful heads of the hostile kings rise up (in the air) as they were cut off by his weapons and mistaking them for an army of Rhus.[158]

This inscription is arresting, if not a bit gruesome. In her analysis, Talbot does invite the reader into the world of medieval Kakatiya inscriptions and underscores the tropes that were commonly used in describing images of battle. In this piece particularly, she notes the imagery of the horses kicking up dust as specific to Kakatiya martial lore.[159]

Typically, what follows the *praśasti* are lists of donors, their transactions, and the intention for which they donated, which do give more insight into historical circumstances than literary elements do. However, *praśastis*, much like the one above, are integrated into this historical receipt, and are apropos to the construction of history at that time. Thus, it is difficult and unwise to ignore wholly literary evidence as a means of reconstructing history, as it too is a product of the nexus of historical circumstances.

Historians take issue with using literary documents as primary evidence for recreating historical record. Literary sources may reveal conceptual worlds associated with "contexts of time and space;" but they do not necessarily record specific people and events. Unfortunately, in dating Māṇikkavācakar literary sources are all that scholars have to work with. Thus, his historical date will remain conjecture until some definitive material information is recovered. This should not, however, prevent further investigations into the literary sources. Culling additional evidence may one day augment material records.

[158] *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.
[159] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

There are six primary reasons why scholars have dated Māṇikkavācakar to the mid-ninth century. Upon reading the *Tiruvācakam*, I suggest that there are seven reasons for placing him, at the very earliest, in the mid-ninth century. My argument is based on Māṇikkavācakar's descriptions of the Tillai temple (Citamparam) that houses the image of Śiva Nāṭarājā̲ṉ or Śiva, Lord of Dance. This will be discussed in greater detail below. K. V. Zvelebil and Glenn Yocum each provide the most comprehensive summary of the debate. Yocum pays greater attention to the details in his book, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva*, because it is primarily concerned with Māṇikkavācakar. Zvelebil's book is a history of Tamil literature, and thus, is not the place for an in-depth discussion on any one particular author. Much of the evidence used to date him, however, is a bit dubious and provides rickety foundation for historical certainty. I would argue, though, that Māṇikkaväckar's literary descriptions of Tillai outweigh most of the other six that have thus far been the means for placing him in the ninth century.

The first piece of evidence is that Māṇikkavācakar is not counted as one of the sixty-three *nāyaṉmār*. Cuntarar, one of the four principal Śaiva poets, does not list him in "Tirutoṇṭattokai," which is a hymn praising the major *bhaktas* with whom he was presumably familiar. Cuntarar is dated to the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century. Thus, it has been argued that Māṇikkavācakar must have lived after Cuntarar.[160] It is reasonable to assume that he may have been left off the list either accidentally or intentionally. Given Māṇikkavācakar's lofty status in the ranks of Tamil Śaivism, it would seem that had Cuntarar known of him, he would have included him in the fold.

[160] Glenn Yocum, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

It is also purported that Māṇikkavācakar refered to Śaṅkara's concept of *māyā vāda* (Tam. *vātam*); and since Śaṅkara died around 820 CE, it is assumed that Māṇikkavācakar lived subsequent to him.[161] The passage in question is in the fourth hymn of the *Tiruvācakam*, the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval.": *camaya vātikaḷ tattam mataṅkaḷē/ amaivadāka araṟṟi malaintaṉar/ miṇṭi māyā vātam eṉṉum/ caṇṭa mārutam cuḻittu aṭittu ārttu* (trans. "the debators of sects fought, babbling aloud, that only their religion was absolutetly correct; they spoke presumptuous, illusory propositions (*māyā vātam*) which are winds that whirl, blow, and roar"). It is reasonable to assume that Māṇikkavācakar was merely using the phrase *māyā vātam* to refer to false conceptions of god, not specifically to Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta philosophy. The Sanskrit terms *māyā* and *vātam* pre-date Śaṅkara, and using the two in a compound prior to the systematization of the concept would not be unfathomable. It is clear that Māṇikkavācakar understood Sanskrit, and thus, had knowledge of works and traditions not from Tamil soil. It is striking that, within the context of the sentences above, Māṇikkavācakar chose those Sanskrit terms rather than an equivalent Tamil phrase. This does not provide an infallible conclusion that he was refuting Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta; but it does resonate as such.

The third piece of evidence comes from the *Tirukkōvaiyār*, Māṇikkavācakar's second work that freely employs *akam* themes and imagery, but is believed to refer to the love between the soul and the divine; rather than between mortals. In this text, there is mention of a Pāṇṭiyaṉ king, Varaguṇa. There were two kings who shared the name Varaguṇa, and both lived during the ninth century: Varaguṇa I (756-815) and Varaguṇa II

[161] *Ibid*.,p. 47.

(ca. 862-880).[162] Many scholars believe that Māṇikkavācakar was a contemporary of the latter Varaguṇa[163]

Up to this point, Yocum has followed Zvelebil's outline, but with greater detail. He diverges with his fourth bit of information and provides one of the more dubious pieces of evidence for his dating. Yocum suggests that Māṇikkavācakar's mention of two *nāyaṉmār*—Caṇṭēcuvarar and Kaṇṇappaṉ—is actually a reference to two other *nāyaṉmār* who presumably lived before him; i.e., Campantar and Cuntarar.[164] Anyone who confronts premodern India knows that names provide little basis for historicity: students may adopt their teacher's name; or authors may claim to be another to lend authority to their work; and the list goes on. In such a world, one places oneself in a tenuous situation with this suggestion, particularly when one claims that the mention of one (or, worse, two) particular person indeed insinuates another. The reason I did not mention this in the case of the Varaguṇa-s is because there is epigraphical evidence that attests to the existence of these two kings. This, of course, is not irrefutable; but it does provide a more reasonable and clear link with the historical past. I assume that Zvelebil did not cite this piece of evidence for Māṇikkavācakar's date for similar reasons.[165] Yocum's suggestion here provides little, if any, value to the debate on Māṇikkavāckar's date.

The fifth piece of evidence is the similarity between Māṇikkavācakar's seventh hymn, the "Tiruvempāvai," and the "Tiruppāvai" of the Vaiṣṇava poet, Āṇṭāḷ. Yocum cites Jean Filliozat's suggestion that since the *pāvai* songs are remarkable in Tamil

[162] Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 156-157, 172, 174-175.
[163] Glenn Yocum, *op. cit*.,p. 47.
[164] *Ibid*.,p. 47.
[165] K.V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, pp. 143-144.

literature, then the two poets must have been contemporaries; and Āṇṭāḷ is believed to have lived during the mid-ninth century.[166]

The last piece of evidence that is used to date the poet comes from a Sinhalese chronicle. The *Nikāyasangrahaya* suggests that King Sena I (833-853) was converted to Śaivism in Citamparam. An ascetic, the chronicle details, cured the king's mute daughter; and he was then converted to Śaivism. This miraculous feat is recounted in a late hagiography of Māṇikkavācakar, the *Tiruvātavūrar Puraṇam* (ca. fifteenth century).[167]

It is not difficult to see why the dating of Māṇikkavācakar has been difficult. The above evidence seems to place him in the ninth century, and that is the scholarly consensus to date; however, it is certainly not infallible. Cogent arguments could easily be made against any one of the pieces of evidence presented above.

Another piece of evidence that seems to have been overlooked in dating Māṇikkavācakar is his descriptions of the temple at Tillai (Citamparam). He frequently evokes Tillai in his lyrics, as this was the temple where the poet finally rested, near to the shrine that houses the image of Śiva Nāṭarājan̲, and waited for Śiva's *aruḷ* to release his soul from bondage. If one were to stroll around the temple tank today, one could read the entire fifty-one hymns of the *Tiruvācakam* incised on the surrounding walls; or one could see images of Māṇikkavācakar in subsidiary shrines. His image also leads the procession in several of the annual festivals held at Citamparam.[168] Unfortunately, however, none of Māṇikkavācakar's depictions of Tillai are as comprehensive as one would like; but there are some compelling details that further suggest he dates to the mid-ninth century. He

[166] Glenn Yocum, *op. cit*., pp. 47-8.
[167] *Ibid*., p. 48.
[168] Paul Younger, *The Home of the Dancing Śivan̲*, pp. 194-201.

speaks of aspects of the temple that do not appear prior to that date, which was when the Cōḻas designated Citamparam as their family temple.[169] Thus, unless he was prescient, there is little doubt that the temple he describes can only be assigned to at least the mid-ninth century.

In his book, *The Home of the Dancing Śivaṉ—The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Citamparam*, Paul Younger provides a detailed description of the architectural development of Citamparam. Younger posits six distinct phases of the temple complex beginning in 300 CE to the present day. What concerns us are the differences between Period One (300 to 850) and Period Two (850 to 950) because Māṇikkavācakar is believed to have lived in either one or the other. Period One is characterized by the presence of the temple tank, *ciṟṟampalam* (Skt. *cit sabhā*), and the *etirampalam* (Skt. *nṛtta sabhā*); and during Period Two, the golden roof was added to the *ciṟṟampalam* (or *maṉṟu*, as Māṇikkavācakar also referred to it), the *pērampalam* (Skt. *deva sabhā*) and the Hundred Pillared Hall were constructed, and a surrounding wall was erected.[170]

Māṇikkavācakar's brief descriptions of Tillai refer to two of the main features that define Period Two. It seems that he was dazzled with the splendor of the Tillai shrine, particularly the gold roof that houses the image of the Śiva Nāṭarājaṉ. He never explicitly refers to the roof, but he does refer to Tillai and/or the central shrine as golden in several places. For instance, in the sixteenth line of the "Kōyiṉ Mūtta Tiruppatikam," the twenty-first hymn, Māṇikkavācakar describes Śiva as "King of the Golden Shrine" (*poṉṉampalattu araicē*); the following line describes him as "Ambrosia, Dancer in the Golden Shrine" (*poṉṉampalattu āṭum amutē*). In the fifteenth hymn, "Tirutōṇōkkam," he

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[169] Younger offers a concise history of the Cōḻas identifying their family lineage with the temple, *ibid*., pp. 92-94; 131-142.
[170] *Ibid*., pp. 81-98.

refers to the Śiva as "The Dancer Who Performs the Sacred Dance in Tillai's Shining Shrine" (*tikaḻtillai ampalattī tirunaṭam ceykūttā*). Furthermore, in the thirteenth hymn, the "Tiruppuvalli," Māṇikkavācakar also refers to the thick wall surrounding the shrine (*taṭamār matil tillai ampalamē tā<u>n</u> iṭamā*). If Younger's periodization is indeed correct, these few examples place Māṇikkavācakar in the mid-ninth century at the earliest. As I cited above, the gold roof was not placed on the central shrine until at least 850 CE; and the wall surrounding the temple was also non-existent in Period One, as the shrine was surrounded only by forest. Thus, Māṇikkavācakar could only be describing the temple in the second phase of architectural development, which began in 850 CE.

For some reason, Younger is adamant about placing Māṇikkavācakar in the fifth century CE, following Śaiva tradition, despite evidence to the contrary. In doing so, he seems to ignore key elements within the hymns that suggest otherwise. For example, in underscoring the importance of Māṇikkavācakar's position in the Citamparam temple tradition, Younger uses several of G. U. Pope's translations from the *Tiruvācakam* that mention Tillai in the refrain. Ironically, Younger provides the fortieth hymn as a primary example, and in this particular hymn Māṇikkavācakar describes Tillai as golden:

> Bud on the bough, then rounded flower, next fruit unripe, then fruit
> Matured,—my frame thus formed He made His own, nor hence departs—
> That trusting thought may ever cling to Him, as it clings now,
> *I've reached Him Who holds sway in Tillai's golden home of joy*![171]

It is remarkable that this reference was lost on Younger, as there is no mention of the "golden home of joy" in his argument for Māṇikkavācakar's dating—such a discussion would undermine his hypothesis. Tangential to his argument about Māṇikkavācakar's dating, Younger claims that prior to Period Two, the roofs of the

[171] Trans. G.U. Pope, as cited in Paul Younger, *op. cit*., p. 200. The italics are Younger's, not Pope's.

structures were thatched.[172] Thus, it seems a bit of a stretch to assign a golden hue to a thatched roof or to describe it as shining; perhaps, metaphorically, this is plausible, but unlikely. Another line of reasoning may lead to a hypothesis that the golden home of joy is referring to something other than the central shrine. Given the centrality of the golden roof within the Citamparam history and tradition, this also seems unlikely. But what, too, of Māṇikkavācakar's mention of the surrounding wall? This is not mentioned in Younger's argument for a fifth century date because there was no wall during that period.

While the dating of Māṇikkavācakar has yet to be concretely established, most evidence indicates that he lived during the mid-ninth century, not the fifth century as both the Śaiva tradition and Younger claim. It would be nice, of course, to finally put this debate to rest. Hopefully this will happen as new evidence comes to light.

§ 4. WHY *ARUḶ*? CONCEPTUAL IMPORTATION AND SEMANTIC TECTONICS

Scholars of Tamil literature frequently point to the poetic and conceptual overlap between the earlier Classical Tamil poetry and the hymns of the *nāyaṉmār*.[173] This was not a coincidence, however. Utilizing the poetics and adopting certain key concepts from the earlier hymns was a decisive means to give cultural legitimacy to Tamil Śaivism. From about the middle of the sixth century CE until the period of Māṇikkavācakar, the *nāyaṉmār* were engaged in theological warfare with the Jains and Buddhists. This period has been described as a "Great Hindu Revival."

Prior to this resurgence, as Nilakanta Sastri points out, there was harmony and tolerance between the various religious communities, but this was stamped out sometime around the fifth or sixth centuries. This occurred, he notes, because many in the Tamil

[172] *Ibid*., pp. 84-87.

[173] To a lesser degree, there is a similar relationship between the poetics of Classical Tamil poetry and those of the hymns of the Vaiṣṇava *āḻvar*. Since this project is solely concerned with the Śaiva tradition, I will not address this issue here.

country were fearful that the whole land was on the brink of converting to Jainism and Buddhism.[174] Śaivas perceived these so-called heretical faiths as posing a direct threat to Śaiva orthodoxy because they denied the authority of revelation and promoted atheism.[175] Thus, we see in the hymns of the *nāyaṉmār*, most notably in those collected in the *Tēvāram*, a scathing derision of the precept and praxis of the Jain and Buddhist monks. Although Māṇikkavācakar was far more muted about this rivalry than were his predecessors, he did find the occasional opportunity to excoriate their doctrine and practice.

As Indira Peterson has shown, the Śaiva poets proposed that in order to be Tamil in the fullest sense, one needed to eschew the false doctrines of the heretics and practice Śaiva *bhakti*. Only in this way, then, would practitioners realize their true Tamil identity and cultural heritage. One way in which the *nāyaṉmār* accomplished this was through accusing the heretics of, among other things, not knowing the Tamil language.[176] Thus, adopting the poetics and importing key concepts from Classical Tamil poetry gave the Śaivas cultural legitimacy. They projected the very embodiment of Tamilness, and Śaivism was the only true Tamil religion.

While composing in the Tamil language and utilizing certain techniques of the earlier bards gave cultural legitimacy to the hymns of the *nāyaṉmār*, the Śaivas also showed an implicit yet candid disdain for the this-worldly approach of those bards. This

[174] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 422-3.

[175] Richard Davis, "The Story of the Disappearing Jains: Retelling the Śaiva-Jain Encounter in Medieval South India," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John Cort (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 214.

[176] Indira Peterson, "Śramaṇas Against the Tamil Way: Jains as Others in Tamil Śaiva Literature," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John Cort (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), p. 172-3. It is well known that the Jains, and to a lesser extent, the Buddhists had a tremendous impact on Tamil literature and culture. The accusations that these groups did not know Tamil were propaganda *par excellence*. For a more expanded discussion on this issue, see Indira Peterson, op. cit. pp. 166-167.

disdain, however, is couched in the criticism of their contemporary, non-Śaiva-oriented poets, presumably those poets who were engaged in compositions similar to the lost *kōvai* (garland) poem, the *Pāṇṭikkōvai*, which celebrated either one or an amalgamation of Pāṇṭiya kings.[177] The critique of these poets was similar to their criticism of the Jains and Buddhists—they were not engaged in proper worship. While we know that the Jains and Buddhists were considered atheists, what the Śaivas accused them of was not understanding that the only way for spiritual release or enlightenment was through Śiva.[178] In a similar vein, the *bhakti* poets criticized those who continued to laud and worship kings, *i.e*. human patron over divine patron. As we saw in the earlier chapters, this was a practice that was prevalent during the classical period. As David Shulman has shown in excerpts from Cuntarar's hymns, the poet chastised the misguided and ineffectual practice of singing praises to a human patron in hopes of attaining reward. The reward for these bards was, of course, monetary or material. Thus, Cuntarar states:

> You can praise them,
> coax them lovingly,
> cleave to them as servants,
> but they will still give you nothing,
> those fakes—
> listen you poets,
> don't sing to them:
> sing of our father's Pukalūr.
> You will have in this world
>   rice and clothes,
>   a celebration,
>   even an end to sorrow,
> and in *that* life
> without a doubt
> you will rule Śiva's world.[179]

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[177] For a discussion of the *Pāṇṭikkōvai*, see K.V. Zvelebil, *History of Tamil Literature*, pp. 166-7; and Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, pp. 81-91.
[178] Indira Peterson, "Śramaṇas Against the Tamil Way," p. 170.
[179] Translation by David Shulman, "Poets and Patrons in Tamil Literature and Literary Legend," p. 73.

In criticizing the human patron, the *nāyaṉmār*, and Cuntarar here specifically, were making a break from those poets who sought gain from a king, not Śiva;[180] and, by extension, they were criticizing the earlier bards' vision in the classical works, which focused on a similar subject for similar gain. One can view this, then, as a break from Tamil literary and cultural traditions; however, this was not entirely their intention. The Śaivas were interested in recasting a Śaiva Tamil culture that was linked to the literary and cultural past, but this Tamilness differed from any identity that had come before.[181] In order to accomplish this task they had to cast a dark shadow over those people and communities who did not recognize the supremacy of Śiva. In a very calculated way, the Śaivas, on the one hand, critiqued the self-focused, this-worldly approach of the earlier bards, while, on the other, adopted elements of their poetics and imported certain concepts that resonated in the cultural memory of their audiences.

As Norman Culter has shown, the structure of the *bhakti* hymns mirrors the "rhetorical devices" found in the *caṅkam* genre of *puṟam* poetry: 1) poet addressing king, with a) emphasis on king or b) emphasis on poet/king relationship; 2) poet addressing a listener who is explicit in the poem but not identified; 3) poet, who is explicit in the poem, addressing a listener who is not explicit; and 4) neither poet nor listener are identified in the poem. If one were to substitute "god" for "king," then one would see a structural parallel.[182]

In addition to mirroring the "rhetorical devices," the *nāyaṉmār* also imported bardic ideas on ancient Tamil kingship, infused them with religiosity, and employed these

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[180] *Ibid*., p. 73.
[181] Indira Peterson, "Śramaṇas Against the Tamil Way," p. 173.
[182] Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, pp. 61-70.

concepts to describe divinity. In an attempt to recast Tamil culture as Śaiva, one of the most decisive means was through placing Śiva in the role of the supreme Tamil king. George Hart points out that before the rise of a priestly class, the king in ancient Tamil society was the embodiment of sacred power that had to be present and under control for the proper functioning of society. In other words, the king was believed to be responsible for ordering the chaos. This is evident, Hart argues, in the terms that meant king or were associated with kingship in classical Tamil were later applied to the supreme deity. He cites two significant examples: the term for king, *iṟaivaṉ*[183] ("he who is highest"), came to mean god; and the term *kōyil*[184] ("king's house" or "palace") came to designate temple.[185] There were other terms, too, that referred to the ancient Tamil king that the *nāyaṉmār* transmuted to refer to divinity, such as *kō* (king), [186] *talaivaṉ* (head man),[187] and *celvaṉ* (he of wealth; lord).[188] While these examples provide only a sample that the *nāyaṉmār* imported, they do much for representing the conceptual transference between *caṅkam* ruler and Śiva.

Indira Peterson has shown that in a further attempt to localize Śiva, the nāyaṉmār depicted him as the supreme ruler over the Tamil land, fashioned after the ancient kings. This mirrors the context in puṟam poetry.189 Śiva is manifested, she argues, as a genuine

[183] *Tiruvācakam* (*Tiru.*) 1.5; 2.96, 144; 4.102; 5.7; 34.19; 36.14; 47.18

[184] The etymology of *kōyil* is *kō* (king) + *il* (abode). See *Tiru.* 5.55, 382; 9.15, 19; 12.9; 22.39; 37.21, 37

[185] George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, p. 13.

[186] See *Tiru.* 5.55; 7.63; 43.9; 45.10; 48.3.

[187] See *Tiru*. 5.155, 233; 6.160.

[188] See *Tiru*. 1.94; 2.54; 5.188; 7.42; 10.32; 18.34.

[189] Indira Peterson is speaking primarily about the three *nāyaṉmar* whose works are collected in the *Tēvāram*, e.g. Tirunāvukkaracar (affectionately known as Appar, 580-661? CE), Cuntaramūrtti Cuvamikaḷ (b. late 7th century CE?), and Tiruñāṉacampantar (639-655? CE); however, her argument applies to other Śaiva saints, particularly Māṇikkavācakar.

hero of puṟam poetry whose exploits were recounted and glorified in song.[190] In the hymns, he is described as ruling over particular towns and landscapes. He bears all the marks of the ideal ruler, displaying military prowess and undertaking acts of heroism (most notably those actions that were performed in the Tamil countryside)[191] and largesse to safeguard his Tamil "subjects;" and like the earlier caṅkam kings, he was praised by his devoted bards, the nāyaṉmār.[192]

It was not enough merely to use royal epithets to describe him or to recount his heroic deeds, both of which played a significant role in the localization process. As we saw in the first chapter, an ideal Caṅkam king was one who was not only strong but also was munificent. Based on the poems that I presented from the Puṟanāṉūṟu, I argued that generosity, mercy, compassion, etc. were by-products of a king experiencing aruḷ, an elevated state of empathetic awareness. The situation in the bhakti literature, and the Tiruvācakam in particular, is very much the same. Aruḷ as a theological principle, as that which brings proper knowledge, among other things, is difficult to define succinctly. When one speaks of Śiva as being generous or having compassion, what is one speaking of? Certainly the quality of his largesse transcends anything that a mortal king could offer. In the world of Śaiva bhakti, this primarily refers to Śiva imparting his aruḷ so that a devotee may enjoy freedom from the bonds of ignorance, and ultimately, experience the soul's innate capacities.

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[190] There are sixty-three *nāyaṉmar*, also known as the *tiruttoṇṭar āṟupattumūvar* (sixty-three sacred devotees/slaves). Interestingly, Māṇikkavācakar does not appear in this list. As I mentioned earlier, more than likely this has to do with his dates, which fall after the compilation of the original *tiruttoṇṭar* list.
[191] Indira Peterson notes that in the process of "localization," the Tamil Śaiva tradition ascribes the setting of eight of Śiva's mythological deeds as the Tamil countryside and associates a shrine with each one: 1) Śiva cut off one of the heads of Brahmā; 2) killed the demon Andhaka; 3) destroyed Dakṣa's sacrifice; 4) burned Kāma; 5) destroyed the three cities of the demons; 6) flayed the elephant-demon Gajāsura; 7) saved the boy Mārkaṇḍeya from Kāla; 8) destroyed demon Jalandhara; see Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, p. 35 and Appendix C.
[192] *Ibid*., pp. 34-36.

In this regard, the ideas underscoring *aruḷ* in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* remained somewhat intact in the *bhakti* literature. However, the term had to be expanded conceptually to encompass the Śaiva theological principles that the early Tamil kings by definition could not possess. Reformulating this concept did not require a clean break from the older tradition. On the contrary, it was precisely those ideas of mercy, compassion, and generosity stemming from a king's elevated state of awareness that compelled the Śaivas to employ the term as their premier principle.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when *aruḷ*'s semantic range became wide enough to convey a theological principle. Perhaps one of the latest *caṅkam* texts, the *Paripāṭal* (ca. late fourth – early sixth centuries CE), bears the earliest citation of *aruḷ* in a religious context.[193] In the *Paripāṭal*, the term is associated with Murukaṉ (Skt. *Skanda*), one of Śiva's sons, and Tirumāl or Viṣṇu. This text is a transitional work between *caṅkam* and *bhakti* poetry and, as K.V. Zvelebil suggests, is perhaps the earliest example of devotional poetry on the sub-continent.[194] *Paripāṭal* exhibits many of the poetic marks of *caṅkam* poetry, but the compositions are oriented, for the most part, around either of the two deities. The term conveys religiosity here, but there is little within the text itself to suggest that *aruḷ* indicated the same theological concept as found in the ninth century. The authors of *Paripāṭal* did not qualify the term in the same detailed manner as did the later *nāyaṉmār*; in fact, the term appears very infrequently, approximately 9 times within the entirety of the text providing little context with which to evaluate its significance. When compared with the works of the later Śaiva poets, particularly Māṇikkavācakar, who used nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* in

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[193] For a brief description of the problem dating the *Paripāṭal*, see K.V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, pp. 101-2.
[194] *Ibid*., p. 101.

approximately 360 instances in the *Tiruvācakam*, this number pales in comparison. Thus, it is difficult to know precisely how the authors of the *Paripāṭal* understood *aruḷ*.

In employing the term so frequently, Māṇikkavācakar, on the other hand, provides multiple contexts from which we may evaluate the concept. As the remaining chapters demonstrate, *aruḷ*'s semantic range becomes theologically wide enough to indicate any action, so long as it is related to Śiva. The nominal forms, too, describe multiple things: the path of knowledge, Śiva's energy, Śiva Himself, iconographic depictions, and the list goes on. When all the contexts are read in tandem, not discretely, however, it becomes clear that translating the term is incredibly difficult, particularly if one attempts to use a single English term to convey all the shades of meaning. *Aruḷ* is Śiva's fundamental principle, and thus, anything associated with him can theoretically be described with the term *aruḷ*.

Chapter Three: The Poetics of Relapse and Becoming: *Aruḷ* in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*

Like most Śaiva texts, Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* is oriented around motion. It is a movement towards becoming, awakening; and Śiva's *aruḷ* is the source of this activity. Together Śiva and his *aruḷ* are the source of everything in the universe, and everything ultimately returns to Śiva. Ignorance blocks one from realizing not only the transformative effects of *aruḷ*, but also the nature of the universe and one's position in it. Thus, gratification of the five senses becomes the highest pursuit, not transformation of the soul and release from *saṃsāra* (rebirth). The *Tiruvācakam* is, among other things, a text detailing the spiritual battle between proper knowledge and ignorance. This struggle is poignant, and highlighted when the hymns are read together, for no single hymn gives the key to unlock the text.

The battleground is the mundane world, as the *Tiruvācakam* is a description of Māṇikkavācakar's attempt to navigate through phenomenal reality in an attempt to free himself from delusion brought on by the five senses. In this regard, the mundane world is a very real place, not illusory; and as one reads, and more importantly, re-reads the *Tiruvācakam*, one becomes aware that as Māṇikkavācakar described traversing the mundane world, he was also being didactic, illustrating certain theological categories associated with Śiva's *aruḷ*, particularly those related to ignorance. There is also a possibility that he was imitating aspects of Śiva's nature as a means of moving closer to him.

This chapter is concerned with *aruḷ*'s significance in the *Tiruvācakam*. This analysis lays the groundwork for the following chapter, where I analyze the grammar and syntax of nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* as appearing in certain portions of the text. What is of interest here, however, is how Māṇikkavācakar understood *aruḷ* to operate,

and particularly which effects he would experience as a devotee. Similar to the characters in *caṅkam* poetry, Māṇikkavācakar is largely experiencing the absence of *aruḷ* in the *Tiruvācakam*; and much like the bards of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, his compositions were a primary means by which Māṇikkavācakar hoped to experience the full effects of Śiva's *aruḷ*, as they were his offerings in worship. The absence did not prevent him from discussing, alluding to, or describing *aruḷ*'s presence; on the contrary, Māṇikkavācakar used three principal techniques to describe its active presence: he implies having experienced gradations of *aruḷ*—not the full-blown results—and longs to experience the totality. This situation is very similar to the plight of the narrators in the *caṅkam* anthologies.

Māṇikkavācakar implies receiving degrees of Śiva's *aruḷ*. He describes different effects that it has on him: removal of his ignorance, enslaving him, placing him on the path of knowledge (which is also labeled the 'path of *aruḷ*'), inducing an ecstatic state, and ultimately freeing him from *samsāra*. As we will see in the following chapter, Māṇikkavācakar suggests, at least grammatically, that he did receive Śiva's *aruḷ* upon his enslavement. The most common verbal compound used to designate this is *aṭkoṇṭaruḷi* (*aṭ* = √*aḷ*, 'to rule;' *koṇṭu* = adverbial participle of √*koḷ*, 'to take,' to hold;' *aruḷi* = adverbial participle of √*aruḷ*). This contextually translates as 'having enslaved [me]". The interesting component is the adverbial participle *aruḷi*. While the use of the term gives divine impetus to the action, it also suggests that, in the enslavement, Śiva imparted his *aruḷ* to him. Thus, when Māṇikkavācakar relays his transgressions or describes himself in the throes of a moment of weakness, he questions Śiva's presence. Structurally, this is similar to the *akam* characters who, whether set in the mood of *kuṟiñci* (love-in-union) or *pālai* (separation), experience *aruḷ*'s absence.

Māṇikkavācakar implicitly suggests that receiving Śiva's *aruḷ* does not necessarily equate with a total awakening to ultimate reality, that is freeing the soul from the cycle of rebirth. He received Śiva's *aruḷ* when he was inducted into Śaivism; however, once on the path that brings proper knowledge, he falls off, overwhelmed by desire. In several places, particularly in the sixth hymn, the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam," Māṇikkavācakar describes his difficultly in avoiding temptation and overcoming lust. In describing his difficulty, he questions how he could have received Śiva's *aruḷ* at the moment of enslavement and still be plagued by desire.

Māṇikkavācakar also provides descriptions of bodies reeling in *aruḷ*'s effects. These descriptions, however, seem more like testimonials about the potential effects of *aruḷ*. As we saw in the introduction, he tells of his body trembling, of losing the capacity for speech, and control over his emotions; however, in these instances, he seems to be providing more of a testimonial because if he were indeed under the full influence of *aruḷ* he would not be able to speak coherently.[195] Thus, much like the *akam* actors, Māṇikkavāckar hopes for a "standing appointment" with Śiva's *aruḷ*.

Structurally, he provides a space in some of his hymns that allowed for the performance of an ecstatic experience, presumably brought on by Śiva's overwhelming presence (*aruḷ*). In one hymn in particular, the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" ("The Sacred Physical Universe") Māṇikkavācakar opens with twelve to thirteen syllables per line; the syllable count suddenly shortens in the twenty-ninth line and each sentence is punctuated with a polite imperative. This section of the hymn lasts for about thirty lines and then he seems to emerge from his episode. Once he does, the syllabic structure then returns to its initial beat pattern as he reflects a more subdued temperament, having seen Śiva and Umā

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[195] See p. 13.

before him. That the structure of this hymn and others are designed to facilitate a display of ecstasy is interesting, and perhaps, speaks to the requisite mode of ecstatic worship for the *nāyaṉmār*: not only did they demonstrate this behavior; it is also reflected in literature.

In describing the absence of *aruḷ*, Māṇikkavācakar leads the audience through his emotional mania, puntucated with lament for the condition of his soul. In discussing *aruḷ*'s absence, it seems that he highlights medieval Śaiva wisdom regarding ignorance. Theoretically, one would differentiate between those who are ignorant and those who possess proper knowledge, and there would be no middle ground: once a person gains proper knowledge, they are no longer ignorant. Until that time, however, one remains unaware. But, as I mentioned above, Māṇikkavācakar implies stages in his spiritual development. Thus, the pages of the *Tiruvācakam* do not reflect a person who has experienced the liberating quality of Śiva's *aruḷ*. His hymns were a means by which he worshipped Śiva in order to receive *aruḷ*; they reflect more of a state of ignorance, a longing for union, than they do a liberated soul.

The most interesting aspect of his descriptions of being spiritually unaware is that he is candid about his transgressions. Māṇikkavāckar does not directly comment on this or that category of ignorance: he describes his behavior and from that description the audience is able to understand ignorance in the absence of Śiva's *aruḷ*. As I demonstrate below, I have drawn on the seven categories of ignorance from a sixteenth-century commentary on Umāpatiśivācarya's *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* because I believe that these categories are present within the text.

I also argue for the possibility that, due to the erotic nature of his transgressions, Māṇikkavācakar was imitating Śiva's behavior. It is clear that he imitates Śiva in outward appearance and behavior (acting like a mad person) to move closer to him.

There are few rationalizations that reconcile a Śaiva ascetic who gives in to temptation and carnal desire. Śiva's persona in mythology is that of an erotic ascetic, as Wendy Doniger has pointed out,[196] and the *Tiruvācakam* demonstrates awareness of this paradox. Māṇikkavācakar describes Śiva as both the ideal ascetic and ideal husband; although he tends to highlight Śiva's saving, not erotic nature. Nonetheless, many of the hymns in the text make some kind of reference to the physical features of women: eyes, breasts, lips, hips, and/or hair. Most of the time, Māṇikkavācakar overcomes temptation for the features listed above; other times he does not. In light of all this, it is clear that the *Tiruvācakam* allows for multiple interpretations, and these interpretations can be held simultaneously as they reveal aspects that may seem disparate actually form a whole.

§ 1. THE *ŚAIVĀGAMAS* AND MĀṆIKKAVĀCAKAR'S PHILOSOPHICAL LEANINGS

At first glance, it is easy to interpret Māṇikkavācakar's expression of his deeds as deeply personal and subjective, and fail to realize that behind the compositions is an author who also thought objectively and was versed in Śaiva philosophy at the very least. The *Tiruvācakam* is indeed a spiritually emotive text; however, I am hestitant to reduce all of Māṇikkavācakar's outpourings to the immediate, intuitive experience of his union with Śiva, as Glenn Yocum suggests.[197] Rather, I would argue that Māṇikkavācakar is not experiencing union in the pages of the *Tiruvācakam*. As I emphasized above, his compositions were the vehicle for union, not the result of his union; there is much more going on in the text than merely intution. The Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntin tradition, for instance, refers to him as the embodiment of *jñāna* (knowledge) for specific reasons. I am not suggesting that Māṇikkavācakar was a philosopher in the proper sense. But it seems that his familiarity with philosophical traditions provided a lens through which he

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[196] See Wendy Doniger O'Flahtery, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, Introduction.
[197] Glenn Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva*, p. 137.

interpreted his position within the cosmos and his relation to Śiva. His mention of the *śaivāgamas* underscores his acquaintance with Śaiva philosophical traditions.

The twenty-eight *Śaivāgamas* are Sanskrit liturgical texts that, among other concerns, form the basis for Śaiva ritual and theology; each text details four separate but interrelated subjects that constitute the appropriate spiritual perspective: knowledge (*jñāna*), ritual (*kriyā*), conduct (*caryā*), and discipline (*yoga*).[198] As Richard Davis suggests, the texts claim that there is but a unitary system of knowledge, despite demonstrating otherwise.[199] The *āgamas* are believed to be divine revelation, and thus, on par with the Vedas. As Davis writes, "the knowledge contained in the *āgamas* comes originally from the mouth of Śiva, who knows all. The *āgama* texts as they exist today take pride in tracing their own lineages back to an initial emission from Śiva. By an act of grace, Śiva transmits the various *āgamas* to appropriate divinities, who in turn allow the most eminent sages to hear the teachings, and these sages then pass the *āgamas* on to other human auditors."[200]

Although he never discusses a particular *āgama* exclusively, Māṇikkavācakar was aware of their divine origin and significance. In fact, in the fourth line of the "Civapurāṇam," the first hymn of the *Tiruvācakam*, Śiva is refered to as the embodiment of the *āgamas*: *ākamam āki niṉṟu aṇṇippāṉ tāḷvāḻka* (trans. "I worship the feet of Him Who became the *ākamas* (Skt. *āgama*), Who is the *ākamas*, and Who follows the *ākamas*). Māṇikkavācakar also mentions the genre in the "Kīrttittiruvakval," the second hymn in the text: *mā vēṭṭu āki ākamam vāṅkiyum/maṟṟu avai tammai*

[198] See M. Arunachalam, *The Saivagamas* (Madras: Kurukshetra Publications Press, 1983) for an overview of the genre and the texts.
[199] Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, pp. 10-14.
[200] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

makēntirattiruntu/uṟṟa aim mukaṅkalāl paṇittu aruḷiyum[201] (trans. "having become greatly desirous, he recovered the *ākamam*, and moreover, from the Mountain Makēntira, he graciously revealed them with his five faces").

This mention is not surprising, as the *Śaivāgamic* tradition was influential in Tamilnadu prior to Māṇikkavācakar. Tirumūlar (ca. seventh century CE?), the author of the *Tirumantiram*, the 10th book in the *Tirumuṟai*, refers to the titles of nine *āgamas*: *Karana*, *Kamika*, *Vira*, *Cintya*, *Vatula*, *Yamala*, *Kalottara*, *Suprabheda* and *Makuta*.[202] As Richard Davis points out, however, the *āgamas* available to Tirumūlar are not necessarily the *āgamas* available today, that the texts underwent revisions based on the developments and practices of the Śaiva community. Both Davis and Dominic Goodall place the earliest extant *āgama* manuscript, the *Kiraṇāgama*, as being transcribed in 924 CE.[203] This date puts the transcription of the text within a century of when Māṇikkavācakar lived, if my (and others) suggestion about his date is accurate. Davis further remarks that although the other *āgamas* date after this, there exist layers within the texts that are older than this date, but that scholars lack the means of locating and differentiating this earlier strata from later additions. Thus, he warns that any inclination to expound on the development of pre-tenth century Śaivism from the *āgama* manuscripts is unwise until a method of distinguishing chronological layers within the texts is more fully developed.[204]

We must also consider the possibility that Māṇikkavācakar did not have knowledge of the contents, that he mentioned their name to lend authority to his

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[201] Kīrttittiruvakval, lines18-20.
[202] M. Arunachalam, *The Saivagamas*, p. 6.
[203] Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, p. 13; Dominic Goodall, *Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Commentary on the Kiraṇatantra* (Pondichery: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 1998), p.lxxxvi
[204] Richard Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-14.

compositions. This, however, seems unlikely given that the texts were circulating in south India before the ninth century. Richard Davis cites a royal inscription dating to the eighth century on the Śiva Kailāsanātha temple in Kañcipuram, Tamilnadu. The inscription was composed by Pallava king Narasimhavarman II (695-728) in which he claims to have removed defilement by following the path of Śaiva Siddhānta; his titles listed in the inscription include "follower of the *āgamas*" and "one whose means of knowledge is the *āgamas*."[205] If a king and a Śaiva poet, both of whom lived before Māṇikkavācakar, were purporting the authority of the *āgamas*, it stands to reason that Māṇikkavācakar was also familiar with their contents, as he positioned himself near to the Śaiva temples where the texts would have been circulating and studied.

It is extremely difficult to determine whether or not the theology located in the *āgamas* had any bearing on Māṇikkavācakar's interpretive lens or influenced his subject matter and style of composition. For one, as Davis pointed out, it is difficult, and perhaps, unwise to discuss the contents of the *āgamas* prior to the tenth century. It does appear, however, that many of the categories used in the later Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, primarily those cataloging the seven effects that ignorance has on the soul, are present in his compositions; whether the inclusion of these states was calculated is impossible to determine with existing evidence. While applying categories from later Tamil Siddhāntin theology to the *Tiruvācakam* may be anachronistic, I believe that it does assist in organizing the imagery and contents of the hymns in meaningful ways. I believe the categories of ignorance are revealed as operating in the text when one approaches it didactically. Both the Tamil Siddhānta and the pan-Indian Sanskrit Siddhānta traditions list seven states that ignorance brings to a soul. The list includes: *mōkam* (confusion),

[205] *Ibid*., p. 12.

matam (rapture), *rākam* (love), *vicātam* (despondency), *cōcam* (dessication), *vaicittiriyam* (delusion), and *aricam* (Skt. *harṣa*: joy, pleasure). I utilize this list to provide a structure to the *Tiruvācakam*, particulary in the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam." This list is found in Nirampavaḻakiya Tecikar's sixteenth-century commentary on Umāpati's *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* (ca. fourteenth century). An identical list is found in the *Pauṣkarāgama* (on which Umāpati wrote a commentary), which is an *upāgama* or "subsidiary" treatise of the *Pārameśvarāgama*, one of the twenty-eight "root" treatises (*mūlāgama*).

Let us turn now to the *Tiruvācakam*. I have selected the hymns below because I believe they provide an excellent example for demonstrating how Māṇikkavācakar understood *aruḷ*. Given the length of the text, there are certainly other hymns within the *Tiruvācakam* that may do equally as well a job as the hymns below; however, the hymns under consideration represent, in my opinion, some of the more poignant examples that give insight not only into how Māṇikkavācakar understood *aruḷ*, but also gives examples of his style of composition and experience as reflected in literature.

§ 2. Spiritual Movement in the *Tiruvācakam*

When following Māṇikkavācakar through the *Tiruvācakam*, he leads his audience across 'mythscapes' where Śiva is acting for the benefit of souls, didactically directing the audience's attention or contemplation towards Śiva's essence. He also shows that Śiva's love is not ossified, but grows, becoming all-consuming as the soul moves towards maturation. Thus, Śiva manifests in the sacred locales populating the mundane world to assist his devotees. The audience also traverses the hills and valleys of his emotional instability—he grows despondent because he believes Śiva has abandoned him, only to become overwhelmed at his presence, and describes losing control of his faculties. Māṇikkavācakar also paints a picture of Śaivas and non-Śaivas alike, all of whom are in constant motion: the *bhaktas* are moving closer to Śiva, and thus, to proper knowledge;

their spiritual foes are moving further away from Śiva, strengthening their bonds of ignorance. Māṇikkavācakar describes moving away from heretical religions, the philosophy of the Lōkāyats or materialists, *śāstric* prescriptions for fasting, and indeed from all oceans of knowledge, toward the one true path that offers knowledge of Śiva. In this world populated by believers and non-believers alike, Māṇikkavācakar moves across the Tamil countryside visiting Śaiva temples and shrines, ultimately dwelling in Citamparam, the representative center of the Śaiva universe from which Śiva's *aruḷ* emanates outward. In other words, the text, like the universe, is not in stasis but in constant movement.

In the following two sections, we will look at *aruḷ* in both presence and absence. As I mentioned above, like the characters in *caṅkam* poetry, Māṇikkavācakar experiences the absence of *aruḷ*; and like those represented there, longs for the transformation that *aruḷ* affords. Let us turn now to the section on *aruḷ*'s presence. As I outlined above, Māṇikkavācakar discusses and demonstrates the effects of *aruḷ* in three principal ways: showing gradations of its effects; its influence on the body and cognitive functions; and literarily, in the structure of his hymns.

§ 2.1 Ecstatic, Overwhelmed, and Subdued: The Effects of *Aruḷ* on the Body and Mind

Fundamentally, the *Tiruvācakam* is oriented around the soul moving toward Śiva, for spiritual release is the ultimate goal for Śaiva practitioners. The tenth hymn, the "Tirukkōtumpi" ("Sacred Dragonfly"), demonstrates well the text's orientation. As I mentioned previously, Glenn Yocum suggests that the narrator of this hymn is a woman

who is sending a message to Śiva.[206] Given the contents of this hymn, it is highly unlikely that anyone but Māṇikkavācakar is speaking here:

> Who am I? What is my mind? What is knowledge? Who
> knows me?
> What if Śiva had not enslaved me? He of the temple sanctuary;
> ascetic of confused mind, begging for food in a broken
> skull with flesh.
> O dragonfly, go to His lotus feet, sweet like honey—be my
> messenger! 2
>
> Do not drink one drop of honey from a flower, though
> small as a seed of millet:
> whenever we think of him, see him, speak of him, honey—
> the great bliss—flows down, softening all our bones.
> Go, O dragonfly, to the Lord of Dance alone—be my
> messenger! 3
>
> "Those gods are gods indeed!" Fools
> speak thus of false gods on earth.
> Without cause for piety, to cut the clutches of ignorance,
> I cling to the eternal True God.
> O dragonfly, go to that God—be my messenger! 5
>
> In this crazed world, among birth and death,
> possessed of treasure, women, people, tribes, and learning,
> He cleared the affliction of my wavering mind, sowing
> proper knowledge.
> Go, O dragonfly, to the Highest God—be my messenger! 6
>
> Having transcended all intellectual faculties, I have gone
> to worship the feet
> of the Eternal, Blue-throated One: for me, He is refuge.
> He removed the delusion of both death and birth.
> Go, O dragonfly, to Him, Who is a sea of compassion—be my
> messenger! 9
>
> I was sick; I became old. I was like a weanling calf. Here,
> I longed for the pleasure of a dog, not knowing the proper path;
> He came as a mother and mercifully enslaved me.

[206] Glenn Yocum, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

O dragonfly, go to the Lord Who gives happiness—be my
messenger! 10

You did not call me, "stubborn," "rogue," "arrogant."
You melted my stone heart and with compassion, enslaved me.
He is the Lord of beautiful Tillai's court, filled with swans.
Go, O dragonfly, to His beautiful, golden anklet—be my
messenger! 11

Nāyakan̲ made me, a dog, sing of his feet. The Great One
sustains the faults of me, a demon. He mercifully accepts
my service and does not reproach anything.
O dragonfly, go to Īcan̲, Who is like a mother— be my
messenger! 12

Origin of the world, manifested beyond and in this place,
who graciously came with the woman whose plaits are full
with the fragrance of flowers,
Antaṇan̲, the formless truth in the secret language of the Vedas,
enslaved me.
Go to god of sacred form, O dragonfly, be my messenger! 14

Where would I and my thoughts be in relation to Nāyakan̲
if he of flowing, matted locks and his beautiful wife did not
enslave me?
Pirān̲ is the sky, the four directions, and the vast sea.
Go, O dragonfly, to the red feet from which honey flows—
be my messenger! 15

When I pondered his sacred form, which is beyond thought,
I experienced a joy free from delusion from my Master's flood
of great compassion. My lord alone enslaved me.
O dragonfly, go to that Master, be my messenger! 16

Having been overwhelmed, I dove into the deceit of wealth. As
days passed I lay there, judging it true. He who enslaved me is
called "Dancer in the Tillai's Court," "Complete Soul," "My Teacher."
Go, O dragonfly, to his flowered feet that give completeness—
be my messenger! 17

G.U. Pope has suggested, and I agree, that Māṇikkavācakar is addressing the soul in this hymn; and the dragonfly (*kōttumpi*) is its metaphor.[207] These verses are abounding with a whirlwind of activity. The lines carry the reader in multiple directions, all of which demonstrate the hope for unification with Śiva.

This tension between awareness and ignorance is present in the opening verse of this excerpt. Māṇikkavācakar poses paradigmatic existential questions: "Who am I? What is my mind? What is knowledge? Who knows me?" These questions fit well into the thematic structure of the hymn, and indeed, the text as a whole. Māṇikkavācakar wants his soul to unite with Śiva; however, as the above queries imply, he has yet to transcend individuation. In the sixth verse, for instance, he says that Śiva sowed proper knowledge in him; however, he continues to seek unification with Śiva, as is reflected in his request for the dragonfly to be his messenger. Furthermore, if we read this hymn in tandem with other hymns in the text, a different picture of the poet's condition emerges. We will return to this below.

He answers this series of (rhetorical) questions at the opening with (another) rhetorical question: "What if Śiva had not enslaved me?" While the initial questions are not explicitly explained with the latter, Māṇikkavācakar provides a sense of resolution because these themes are the subject of Śaiva discourse. In posing these questions, Māṇikkavācakar provides a useful outline that directs the reader's attention. In keeping these questions in mind, many of the details and images that may appear randomly scattered throughout the text become unified in an over-arching quest for proper insight.

The first question, "Who am I?", is an age-old question and seems pertinent when we understand that Māṇikkavācakar presents himself as constantly battling desire for

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[207] G. U. Pope, *The Tiruvaçagam*, p. 139.

sensual pleasure. One interpretation, then, may be in direct reference to the delusion of the senses. If they control him and dictate his behavior, then how should he understand himself in relation to Śiva? In regard to his follow-up question about enslavement, his identity as a Śaiva is overriding. It should put to rest the angst that stems from uncertainty in the questions. As I mentioned above, another possible interpretation is that these are rhetorical questions. If we read the series in this way, then we can see Māṇikkavācakar arguing for the benefits of the Śaiva path.

Questions about proper knowledge and the nature of the mind permeate the *Tiruvācakam*. It is clear that proper knowledge is not associated with learning in the academic sense. In the ninth verse, he informs the audience that he has transcended intellectual faculties. This indicates that he has moved beyond learning, for understanding Śiva's totality is not something that comes from intellectual endeavor. Māṇikkavācakar asks, "Who knows me?" He makes it clear that only Śiva knows him, and knows him better than he knows himself. Māṇikkavācakar asks many times why Śiva enslaved him in spite of past, and in some hymns, present actions.

Māṇikkavācakar details above the steps he has taken to rid his soul of ignorance, and what he tells is that this did not occur from his efforts alone. Māṇikkavācakar avoids rationalizing and justifying pleasurable behavior that would thwart his liberation. He mentions in the tenth verse that he had been prone to seek base pleasures—the pleasures that a dog may enjoy—because he did not know the proper path. In the seventeenth verse, he tells of lying around, judging luxury and pleasure to be the highest pursuit. Māṇikkavācakar is not necessarily anti-intellectual, but his hymns suggest that arrogance is the result of prizing the intellect. He also makes it clear that despite his efforts at eschewing worldly pleasures, it was Śiva's forgiveness of his transgressions that put him on the appropriate path towards liberation.

In the twelfth verse, he describes Śiva as sustaining his faults and not reproaching him—despite the characterization of himself as demon. In recognizing the error of his ways, as the eleventh verse indicates, Śiva melted his stone heart. This hymn details the way in which Māṇikkavācakar understands the interaction between the soul and Śiva. There must be a certain awakening, a realization that immediate pleasure must be forsaken so that the potential of the soul to unite with Śiva may be actualized; however, liberation must ultimately come from Śiva himself, it is not something that the soul can achieve alone.

In the above verses, Māṇikkavācakar partly highlights the state of his soul prior to his spiritual enslavement—he sought the pleasures of a dog; his heart was like stone; he was riddled with faults. While he had received Śiva's *aruḷ*, his soul was still not mature enough for unification—he needed to cultivate Śiva's gift for the effects of *aruḷ* to awaken him. Thus, we are presented with gradations of *aruḷ*. There is that element of Śiva that puts a person on the path of proper knowledge, but does not merely give liberation. As I mentioned above, grammatically, the adverbial participle of *aruḷ* is almost always in compound with *aṭkoṇṭu*, *i.e. aṭkoṇṭaruḷi* ("having mercifully enslaved me"); the use of *aruḷ* in this context suggests that it was present or the motivation for his enslavement. I am tempted to translate *aruḷ* here as mercifully; however, if *aruḷ* designates Śiva's activities because everything he performs is for the benefit of souls, then despite the English translation, we can see *aruḷ* being imparted in his enslavement.

It would appear that it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe how Śiva's *aruḷ* transformed his soul. As physical pain destroys language, bringing a reversion to the period before language is learned, as demonstrated through sounds and cries,[208] so too

[208] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 4.

does spiritual liberation destroy language. Māṇikkavācakar is not able to describe specifically the soul's transformation. When he describes the effects of *aruḷ* on the mind and body, he does so after the fact—he recounts the effects for his audience. In this way, his explanation is a testament, for if he were experiencing the overwhelming of *aruḷ*, he would not be able to speak. Let us turn to two excerpts from the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval" (lines 60-65; 81-86). We saw the latter excerpt in the introduction:

> My heart melts in worship, like a candle in contact
> with a flame; 60
> I weep, my body trembles,
> dancing and crying out to god, singing and worshipping.
> It is said that pinchers and fools do not abandon
> what they acquire;
> I have become like that….

> And:

> All good senses focus on a singular point,
> and I cry out, "O Lord!"
> Having lost control of my speech, my hair bristles;
> my hands like flowers come together as a bud
> and my heart blooms;
> at the same moment, my eyes fill with joy and tears. 85
> Everyday he nourishes a love that does not diminish.

In this excerpt, Māṇikkavācakar is telling his audience that he has lost control of his speech and functions of his body; however, as I mentioned above, he discloses this with coherent sentences. The audience is not privy to such pure ecstatic moments, at least not in the pages of the *Tiruvācakam*. It is difficult to know whether these descriptions came from observations or direct experience. He does describe the *aṭiyars* (slaves) of Śiva in a similar manner, as if this behavior was programmatic. Let us return to another example we saw in the introduction. If you will recall, the twenty-seventh

verse from the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" provides a description of Śaiva *aṭiyars* in an ecstatic state.

> Will you leave me, your servant who has fallen, lost control,
> having gone between the mountain of breasts of the women
> with beautiful smiles, who are like beautiful gems.
> O Pure Gem! Having mercifully taken me as yours, having
> placed me in the middle of congregated slaves who weep and
> whose whole bodies tremble. Show me again your feet that
> give knowledge!

Consider also the opening verse of the "Tiruccatakam." You will notice that the description is virtually the same as above. The descriptions suggest that there were certain modes of behavior that a) naturally followed from devotionalism and worship through singing and/or b) that displaying such dispositions was the mark of a Śaiva *bhakti* or *aṭiyar*. I also include select verses from the first decad of the "Tiruccatakam." This is the longest hymn in the text with 400 lines. The following verses not only describe Māṇikkavācakar in worship, but also reflect him pondering and being moved by thoughts of Śiva's *aruḷ*.

> 1. Take care of me, whose body, fully excited, shakes before
> Your fragrant foot; I raise my hands above my head;
> tears swelling, my soul melting. I avoid falsehood— I
> will not abandon You, Who possesses me.
>
> 2. Our Noble One! I will not accept the position of Indra,
> Viṣṇu, or Brahmā, even if I am reduced to nothing.
> I will not make friends with anyone but your devotees. If I live
> with your grace (*aruḷ*), even if I have to enter hell, I will not
> despise it.
> Except for you I will not think of other gods.
>
> 3. My Father! The Best One! I think of the feet of the One Who
> Possesses me.
> I melt, with my mind in rapture for you. Having thought that I am
> a madman, people speak what they think proper. I wander from
> village to village.
> Whatever they thought, they spoke. When will I be dead?

> 5. I have not done penance; having placed fresh flowers, I have not wholeheartedly pleaded with you—I have been born in vain, accumulated all karmas.
> I have not had the fortune of receiving Śiva-knowledge that is inside your loved ones.
> Grant me, Your slave, a birth that leads to your holy feet, O Highest God!
>
> 10. I am not eligible to enter among your devotees, my Perfect Gem!
> Is it proper that you have taken me for your own? You raised me to the highest from the lowest state; You bring down the gods because of their karma. My Lord, this drama you do is deserving Of laughter!

The images in these verses convey the devotion that Māṇikkavācakar bears for Śiva. His only concern is Śiva, and none of the other deities in the pantheon matter. In the opening verse of the hymn, he again provides descriptions of his physical body being overcome with *aruḷ*. He loses control and shakes as tears swell in his eyes, much like the other Śaivas mentioned above. His declaration that Śiva's *aruḷ* is the only thing important is quite poignant. Māṇikkavācakar exclaims that if he had to endure hell, but with Śiva's *aruḷ*, he would not mind. What is striking about this piece is that, though he is a slave to Śiva and has experienced *aruḷ*, he has yet to obtain the knowledge of Śiva that the other devotees have obtained. In reflecting on his past actions, Māṇikkavācakar realizes that his soul is riddled with *karma*, and he laughs, wondering why Śiva enslaved him.

This wonder at why he was given *aruḷ* despite his collection of *karma* hits at the one of the core strands in the text. Māṇikkavācakar is keen on painting Śiva as forgiving. He demonstrates (for his audience) that even the most *karma*-riddled soul has a chance at redemption through devotion. What he does not convey in this particular piece is that the

path to liberation is not simple. The proximity to Śiva and his *aruḷ* will assist the soul in ridding accrued *karma*; but there is still much work that needs to be accomplished.

§ 2.2 the Structure of the Hymns

At certain points in the text there seem to be structural devices designed to facilitate ecstatic experiences. The most poignant example of this occurs in the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti;" this structural device is also present in the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval," which we will see below, and in the "Tiruppoṟcuṇṇam," the ninth hymn.

The "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" is one of the more fascinating hymns in the *Tiruvācakam*. I argue that the structure of the hymn is quite innovative, unlike any other in the text. As is his style, Māṇikkavācakar weaves together a variety of elements—mythology, descriptions of Śiva's divine operations and pervasiveness, and autobiographical depictions. The "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" has 182 lines in total; what I find most innovative about the hymn is the first half. I believe that the structure provides a space to demonstrate an ecstatic experience. As we saw above, ecstasy was a primary means by which the Śaiva *bhaktas* worshipped. They would experience Śiva's presence and would tremble and weep. The difference, of course, between his descriptions of ecstatic moments, either of himself or the other *aṭiyars*, and the following hymn is that, below, he retains the power of speech. It is apparent, however, that he is overwhelmed (at least structurally).

> The realm of the constituted physical world with
> immeasurable and abundant lush phenomena—
> if the inherent beauty of each one were told,
> it would transcend all knowledge.
> Similar to the multitude of particles in a beam of light
>   entering a house— 5
> though small, He is big. If one understands Him,
> Who surpasses Brahmā with a retinue and Viṣṇu,
> He is source and existence with end,

joined with ultimate destruction, liberation, and permanence.
In palpable and subtle forms, He is 10
like a whirlwind implicit in a small wind.
The Beautiful one scattered them, sent them whirling.
He is the Ancient One Who created the creator;
For preservation, He is the God who protects the protector;
He is the God who, thinking without thought, 15
destroys the destroyer. For the six types
of men of the sacred six sects, he is salvation;
He is the source of the celestials;
like a worm, He is possessor of all. Each day
He fixes the sun's light. He gives 20
coolness to the beautiful moon. He gave
heat to the great fire. He imparted
the clear sky's power; He made the
energy in a vast wind; He caused the
sweet taste in shaded water; and for the 25
expansive earth he provided stability.
He bound me and numerous others in
many births and many stations.

Māṇikkavācakar's excitement in describing Śiva here is almost tangible. The concepts build on one another as he works himself into frenzy; and I would argue that this is what occurs, at least structurally. In lines 29-65 the syllables per line suddenly shift to five or six from the thirteen beats previously; the latter count resumes again in line 66. Furthermore, each line is punctuated with the polite imperative *kāṇka* (√*kaṇ*, "to see") or "look!" We will return to this below. In the above portion of the hymn, at least, we begin with a rather calm opening, as if he were answering a rhetorical question. In lines three and four, he states, "*o<u>n</u>ṟu a<u>n</u>ukku o<u>n</u>ṟu ni<u>n</u>ṟu eḻil pakari<u>n</u>/ nūṟṟu orū kōṭiyi<u>n</u> mēṟpaṭu virintana*." Literally, the translation reads, "if the inherent beauty in each one were told, it expands above one hundred million, one hundred and one." The large number refers to all that is knowable, *i.e.* "all knowledge." Thus, "if the inherent beauty in each one (lush, abundant phenomena) were told, it would transcend all knowledge."

Māṇikkavācakar then uses paradox to qualify his claim, which seems an effective means to describe the eternal unknowable.

Paradox is a technique used in other Hindu texts, notably in the *Upaniṣads*. Māṇikkavācakar describes Śiva as beyond comprehension and uses contradiction to convey his all-pervasiveness. Consider lines 5-6: *il nuḻai katiri̱n tu̱ṉa aṇu puraiya/ci̱riya āka periyō̱n*…(trans. "similar to the multitude of particles in a beam of light entering a house—though small, He is big"). The paradox here lies in describing Śiva as small as a particle of dust (or smaller) in a beam of light and then calling him "big." In the context of the *Upaniṣads*, Joel Brereton suggests that, as a literary device, paradox has the capacity to "connect a single principle to opposite and apparently exclusive extremes. By so linking the extremes, they imply that this principle comprehends everything else as well. There is nothing that the principle does not include, nothing that remains separate from it and from everything else within it."[209]

Māṇikkavācakar uses paradox here in the same way. In this instance it is an effective means to explain the first four lines of the hymn: *aṇṭappakutiyi̱n uṇṭai pi̱rakkam/aḷappu arum ta̱nmai vaḷam perum kāṭci/o̱ṉru a̱nukku o̱ṉru ni̱ṉru eḻil pakari̱n/ nū̱ṟru oru kōṭiyi̱n mē̱rpaṭa virintaṉa* (trans. The realm of the constituted physical world with/immeasurable and abundant, lush phenomena/if the inherent beauty of each one were told/ it would transcend all knowledge). The inherent beauty in all phenomena, of course, is Śiva. Following this declaration, Māṇikkavācakar gives a list of Śiva's qualities and operations: unknowable by gods; creator, preserver, and destroyer; he also explains Śiva as being the origin of the sun's rays, the coolness of the moon, the heat of

[209] Joel Brereton, "The Upanishads," in *Approaches to the Asian Classics*, eds. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.131.

fire, the energy in wind, and the sweet flavor of shaded water, *i.e.* the source of all detail in the mundane world. Māṇikkavācakar concludes this section with crying out about the transmigration of souls: *eṉai pala kōṭi eṉai pala piṟavum/ aṉaittu aṉaittu vayiṉ aṭaittōṉ* (trans. He bound me and numerous others in many births and many stations); and he is finally in the birth and station where he can undertake the appropriate worship of Śiva.

After Māṇikkavācakar glorifies Śiva's operations and tells of his own rebirth, the structure of the hymn takes a decided turn towards the ecstatic, as if he were overcome with Śiva's presence (*aruḷ*). The significance of the imperative suggests that he is literally pointing to the phenomenal world around him; or perhaps seeing Śiva in everything around him. Consider the following lines.

Look! The Ancient One. Look! The Complete One!
Look at Him Who has no equal! 30
Look at Him adorned with the tusk of the wild boar!
Look at Him Who has the skin of a wild tiger around his hips!
Look at Him of sacred ash! Look! Whenever I think,
I cannot endure separation! I will perish if I do not join Him.
Look! He is inherent in the sweet music of the *viṇai*. 35
Look at Him who transcends each quality!
Look! The Infinite One. Look! The Old One.
Look at the Great One, Whom Brahmā and Viṣṇu did not see!
See the wonder! See the manifold! See the Ancient One
Who transcends significance in words! 40
Look at the One, distant where thought does not go!
Look at Him Who is caught in a net of devotion!
Look at the One Who is called "The One"!
Look! He completely expands in the expanded world!
Look! His nature is subtle like an atom! 45
Look at Īcaṉ Whose greatness is beyond compare!
Look at Him Who is the rarity in the rare!
Look! He permeates and cherishes all beings!
Look at the Subtle One Whom science does not know!
Look at Him Who pervades top to bottom! 50
Look at Him Who has no beginning nor end!
Look at Him, the cause of bondage and release!
Look at Him, the Moveable and Immoveable!
Look at Him Who knows beginning and end!

Look at Īcaṉ, Who all may obtain! 55
Look at Śiva Whom the gods do not know!
Look at Him Whose nature is masculine, feminine, and neuter!
Look! Even I have seen Him with my eyes!
Look at Him, Ambrosia that gives spontaneous grace (*aruḷ*)!
Look! I see His mercy's greatness! 60
Look at Him Whose red foot touched the earth!
Look! Even I knew He was Śiva!
Look at Him Who, having enslaved me, graced (*aruḷiṉaṉ*) me!
Look at Him Who shares himself with Her Whose eyes are like
kuvaḷai flowers!
Look at Him and Her together! 65

G.U. Pope describes this section as one of epithets. I find this suggestion far too tempered when looking at the hymn as a whole. Māṇikkavācakar is indeed providing a list of epithets, but the use of the imperative in each line builds on the momentum present in the first section of the hymn we saw above. Furthermore, he is commanding his (unidentified) audience to look at what he is seeing. In *A New Approach to Tiruvasagam*, Ratna Navaratnam glosses over this portion of the hymn, citing it as a "memorable" description of his vision.[210] Structurally, I think there is more going on here than either Pope or Navaratnam suggest. Māṇikkavācakar has created a space in the structure of the hymn to demonstrate an experience outside the realm of "ordinary" experiences, something that only a devotee, and perhaps, only a Śaiva *bhakta* can experience.

During the course of this section the reader is again presented with Śiva's superiority—mythologically and operationally—his completeness, pervasiveness, and the saving power of his grace (*aruḷ*), much like the significance in the more tempered lyrics in the opening portion above. The manner in which Māṇikkavācakar speaks here, however, has been fully exacerbated and the language, punctuated with imperatives,

[210] Ratna Navaratnam, *A New Approach to Tiruvasagam*, p. 35.

suggests an elevated level of excitement, almost manic. He again utilizes paradox—all may obtain him, yet no god knows him—as a means to convey Śiva's sublimeness.

Māṇikkavācakar' ecstatic experience seems to climax when Śiva and Umā appear before him. Line sixty-five, the last of this section, reads: *avaḷum tāṉum uṭaṉē kāṇka* (trans. Look at Him and Her together!). There is a decided shift in temperament at this point, and the language and imagery become much more subdued. The syllabic pattern returns to approximately thirteen beats per line and remains so until the conclusion of the hymn. Māṇikkavācakar draws on an *akam* poetics, employing allegory to convey his vision of Śiva's grace (*aruḷ*). The natural elements here do not carry meaning in the same way as they do in *akam* poetry. In other words, there is no chart cataloging the flora and fauna that guides the reader in understanding the mood of the piece. But the use of allegory is indeed similar to how the *akam* poets drew on nature to convey mood.

> The highest bliss is the ancient sea alone,
> appearing like a grand black cloud,
> arising over the sacred and beautiful Peruntuṟai hill;
> the sacred flash of lightning spreading in all quarters,
> removing the bondage of the five senses like a
> snake uncoiling; 70
> the intense distress of the hot season fades away;
> the beautiful red lily radiates bright light.
> Its fury swells like our souls' transmigration;
> it resounds of great compassion like a struck drum;
> the *kāntaḷ* plant issues forth flowers in supplication; 75
> small droplets of sweet grace (*aruḷ*) never diminish:
> the beautiful, lustrous flood reaches every quarter
> and completely swells the lakes, distressing the banks.
> The demon-chariot of the six sects
> electrifies the thirst of a flock of large-eyed deer 80
> who, having greedily drunk, are exhausted, still thirsty
> and faint;
> and so, the great divine stream
> rushes and rises, making sweet eddies that twirl
> and swirl, colliding with and shattering the banks of
> our bondage, 85

and wrenching from the ground the roots of stout trees,
like results of our two actions that accrue over lifetimes;
the stream of grace (*aruḷ*) penetrates the high
embankments of difficult hills and is trapped inside
a tank fully enclosed with fragrant flowers blooming
with honey, 90
and upon the banks where beetles hum, fragrant eaglewood
smoke rises;
as it swells with ever-increasing joy,
devotee-agriculturalists sow
small seeds of love in fields of worship.
Long live the cloud, most difficult to reach in this universe! 95

As Navaratnam suggests, this section is the *pièce de résistance* of the hymn.[211] Pope, on the other hand, claims that the above section is "well nigh untranslatable."[212] I believe Pope is referring to interpreting the allegory because his translation is excellent. The allegory here is quite moving, reminiscent of *akam* poetics. Recall the opening of *Akanāṉūṟu* 72 that we saw in chapter one: "Darkness will be torn as lightning flashes, when a rain cloud unleashes a downpour at midnight."[213] In this poem, the heroine is consoling a heart-broken *tōḻi* (friend) because they misjudged the character of the lover. The opening lines, in my opinion, refer to the removal of false perception because sexual union ultimately occurred. The scenario here is theologically quite different; however, both pieces are concerned with experiencing *aruḷ*. False perception was removed in the *Akanāṉūṟu* poem because the heroine received her lover's *aruḷ*, and in that context *aruḷ* referred to sexual pleasure In the poem above, the allegory, with waters overflowing and smashing banks of bondage, is Śiva's saving grace, his *aruḷ*, which removes delusion; those who do not recognize it, such as the herd of deer (*i.e.* non-Śaivas: members of the

[211] Ratna Navaratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
[212] G. U. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[213] See p. 60.

six sects, whom he refers to above[214]), languish, drinking from the fallacious well of false doctrine: they remain thirsty and grow faint.

Śiva, of course, is the ancient sea, and that sea is his *aruḷ*. Māṇikkavācakar frequently describes Śiva as a vast sea of *aruḷ*. He manifests as the rain cloud that releases what Pope describes as monsoon rain, with torrents that tear vegetation from the roots, like actions from previous births.[215] The deluge removes heat, causing flowers to bloom; its force is awesome, flowing with fury, compassion, and resounding like a drum. The flood is ultimately trapped between the walls of a high cliff and swells with joy (inside the soul). Māṇikkavācakar concludes with the analogy of the agriculturalists (devotees) who sow seeds of love in a fertile field of devotion.

The structure of the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" is, as I argue, one of the more innovative in the *Tiruvācakam*—the sober opening transitions into short lines punctuated with the polite imperative that lead to the allegory. There is another hymn, the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval," that also provides a space in the structure for the demonstration of ecstatic worship. The allegory that defines the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" does not appear: the contents of the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval" are far more autobiographical than what we witness in the "Tirvaṇṭappakuti." In this hymn, Māṇikkavācakar describes his spiritual devolopment: he begins with a description of his past births, moving through the pain suffered during his mother's pregnancy, through the hardships of living (*i.e.*, hunger, poverty, greed, learning), surmounting temptation of women, prevailing over false doctrine, being overcome in worship, and holding fast to the proper path that brings knowledge. He

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[214] It is uncertain exactly to whom Māṇikkavācakar is referring. The authors of the *Tēvāram* also refer to the six sects. Indira Peterson offers several possible explanations. She suggests that the name could refer to "six sectarian groups in the Hindu classical tradition, each taking a particular deity for the center of its cultic focus. Other possible interprestations: six different religious traditions; six sects within Śaivism (*akaccamayam*); the six "schools" (*darśana*) of Indian philosophy." See *Poems to Śiva*, pp. 132-133.
[215] G. U. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

closes this section with a description of Śiva's love. Māṇikkavācakar then concludes with a lengthy section of praise.

Like the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" above, each line in the concluding section has a description of an attribute of Śiva or the effect of his presence followed with an exclamation of praise (*pōṟṟi*). "*Pōṟṟi*" is not an imperative, but an adverbial participle; however, translating it as such would not make sense in English. I translate it in the present tense to preserve something of the rhythm of the hymn. Although I make a similar argument as above, that the structure provides for the demonstration of an ecstatic experience, the autobiographical nature of this hymn in and of itself is quite moving. While I have not provided the entirety of the hymn, I do provide a substantial portion. This way, as readers, we are able to follow Māṇikkavācakar's line of thought and witness the transition into the fervent episode:

> In order to worship easily, You came to the world surrounded
> by the expanding sea. 10
> Starting with an elephant and ending with an ant,[216]
> I lived through these inevitable births according to karma.
> In this human birth, in the womb of my mother,
> as an embryo, I even lived through the attack of lowest worms;
> at the end of one month, I survived the split into two; 15
> and as a result of the second month, I survived the singular split;
> and at that third month, I survived the fluid from the mother;
> and in the fourth month, I survived the great darkness;
> in the fifth month, I survived dying;
> in the sixth month, I survived distress from secretion; 20
> in the seventh month, I survived premature birth;
> in the eighth month, I survived distress;
> I survived the afflictions that come in the ninth month;
> at the appropriate tenth month, I survived the pain,
> experienced with the mother, in the sea of distress. 25
> As a child, I survived all the things in a year

[216] The nuance here conveys a gradation of size: the elephant being large, and the ant small. Mānikkavācakar delineates in greater detail his various births in the *Civapurāṇam*, see lines 26-31.

that approached in my development.
As a man, I survived, along with the morning filth, the
severe heat of day,
hunger at night, and the journey during sleep.
I survived the captivation of the sharp eyes of women
with black hair, 30
red lips, and white teeth, whose appearance is like
a peacock in the rainy season;
of their breasts, pressed together, blooming full inside,
standing up, the *kaccu* cloth
breaking, spreading radiance; as the breasts expand at
the top, the waists of the
women grow tired, they suffered; their breasts having risen,
sides expanding,
so the midrib of a palm leaf could not be placed between them. 35
Of the vast activities in this mad, expanded world,
I survived greed, which is like an intoxicated elephant;[217]
I survived many oceans of learning;[218]
I survived in the distress from wealth;
and having survived poverty, the ancient poison, 40
and the varied activities of limited boundaries,
the thought that there is a god arose;
and when that matter was contemplated, it was not disliked.
The power of six *crore* of delusion,[219]
in various illusions began. 45
Relatives and neighbors gathered,
and spoke of atheism until their tongues scarred;[220]
a gathering of old souls around me
seized me, called to me; they were disturbed.
Brahmins quoted from the *śāstras* 50
to show fasting was highest;
the debaters of sects fought, babbling aloud
that only their religion was absolutely correct;
they spoke presumptuous, illusory propositions (*māyāvādam*),
which are winds
that whirl, blow and roar; 55
the materialists, like a bright and strong snake,[221]

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[217] The intoxicated elephant is a metaphor for an uncontrollable and desiring mind.
[218] Learning is referred to as an ocean because education is so vast, but one can never know Śiva through education because one can never acquire all knowledge or the proper knowledge.
[219] A *crore* equals ten million.
[220] The exact translation of *ṉāttaḻumpu* is 'tongues scarred.' The reference is idiomatic, employed to convey when one, in hopes of convincing, speaks so much that the tongue scars.

impart deadly poison;
among those ideas, many delusions surrounded me;
but I escaped, without weariness in retaining my grasp.
My heart melts in worship, like a candle in contact
with a flame; 60
I weep, my body trembles,
dancing and crying out to god, singing and worshipping.
It is said that pinchers and fools do not abandon
what they acquire;
I have become like that. In uninterrupted, good love, like
a nail driven into a living tree,[222] 65
the oozing of my heart grows great;[223] I became
tumultuous like a sea,
in harmony with the softening mind, my body trembles.
While the world laughed at me, calling me "demon,"
I abandoned shame. The people's hate-filled words,
I took as ornaments. Without trouble, 70
I lost arrogance. I developed a desire to know You.
With astonishment, I cling to the highest path;
my mind like a cow crying uncontrollably for her calf, frenetic.
Even in dream, I do not think of other gods.
The highest, precious one came to earth 75
and became the great teacher; he graced me.
I do not condemn his grace (*aruḷ*) as trivial; I was like a shadow,
not knowing separation from the pair of sacred feet.
I worshipped in front and followed behind without disdain;[224]
in that direction, I yearned for You, my frame
softened, its structure gone.[225] 80
The river of love overwhelms the banks.

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[221] The choice of *oṇṭiṟal* (*oṇ* = bright; *tiṟal* = strong) is significant because the materialists or *Lokayatan* were appealing to the public in their expositions against the existence of god.

[222] The reference to the living tree is an analogy to the easiness with which love permeates him. It is not easy to drive a nail into a dead tree because of the atrophy, but it is easy in a green, living tree.

[223] There is a word play/contrast of words in this line that is difficult to convey in English. √*Kaci*, which I translate as oozing, has a more nuanced meaning. It is a stage in the beginning flow of water. It is not a trickle. It refers to the stage before a trickle. This is in contrast with √*peru*, which describes a swelling of water.

[224] This line is not a literal translation. The prepositions *muṉ* and *piṉ* refer to 'before and after.' I inserted the 'worship' and 'follow' as they seemed the most logical activities. He worships before Śiva and follows behind him. The use of these prepositions also, I think, alludes to the analogy of the 'shadow' in the previous line.

[225] This is a particularly difficult line to translate. It consists of two verbs that bear similar emotional resonance: √*naintu* and √*uruku*—the former means 'to soften' and the latter 'to melt.' In an emotional context they both convey a sense of empathy. Both are modifying *eṉpu*, which means 'bone;' but which I take to mean body or frame in this context.

All good senses focus on a singular point, and I cry out, “O Lord!”
Having lost control of my speech, my hair bristles;
my flower-like hands come together as a bud
and my heart blooms;
at the same moment, my eyes fill with joy and tears. 85
Everyday he nourishes a love that does not diminish.

The movement between themes in this portion of the hymn is almost jolting; but therein lays the richness, for each provides the ground for Māṇikkavācakar’s progression towards Śaivism. He also emphasizes the spiritual importance of moving through the mundane world. Māṇikkavācakar provides an abridged biography of his activities prior to conversion that stress that the “mad” world prompted the idea of god. In this regard, we can divide the hymn into two parts: pre- and post-Śaivism. If you will recall, at line 42 the subject matter in the hymn changes from concern with mundane reality to religious identity and holding fast when faced with fallacious doctrine. However, given the first line of this excerpt (“In order to worship easily, You came to the world surrounded by the expanded sea”), everything occurring is framed within a Śaiva perspective.

Māṇikkavācakar is keen on emphasizing not only his various births, ranging between an insect (ant) and a large mammal (elephant), which seems more like a reference to everything based on difference in size; following this, he launches into a detailed discussion of his gestation as a fetus. The vague language he uses in his descriptions of each month suggests that he had knowledge of medical sciences. It is difficult to say this with certainty, however. Following the rather unpleasant description of his experience in the womb, Māṇikkavācakar describes the physical development and functions of the body: the passage from childhood through puberty; the dispelling of waste; the suffering of heat; hunger; and the journey during the dream state. Māṇikkavācakar then provides a provocative description of women; and despite the

detailed description of their physical form, he overcame temptations of the flesh. He then moves to egoistic tendencies and vanquishes them: greed, arrogance of erudition, worry from money, and the effects of poverty. He then reveals that *because* of the activities in the world, the thought of god arose.

Following this, Māṇikkavācakar describes the religious milieu and their varied opinions about which is the proper path: he survived atheism, sectarian debators, Brahmanism, and materialists. In jubilation, he describes retaining his grasp on the proper path without having been duped into believing in erroneous doctrine and, as we have seen previously, describes his worship: he melts, he weeps, he trembles, he cries out, he sings; and because of his tendencies towards the ecstatic, the public ridiculed him (lines 66-70: "I became tumultuous like a sea/ in harmony with the softening mind, my body trembles/while the world laughed at me, calling me "demon," I abandoned shame. The people's despised words, I took as ornaments").

The derision of society does not deter Māṇikkavācakar. One of the most interesting images in this piece, in my opinion, is his description of taking the "hate-filled words" that people hurl at him and wearing them as ornaments. As I mentioned in the introduction, this statement shows his position as being on the fringe of society, and among those who were deriding him were orthodox Hindus, as his condemnation of śāstric prescriptions above alludes to. Māṇikkavācakar describes the longing he has to find Śiva as a cow frantically searching for her calf. Śiva then appears on earth as a benefit for souls. He concludes the section with a word on Śiva's infinite love. Māṇikkavācakar then begins the concluding section of the hymn at line 87 which continues until line 227. As I described above, each line makes a claim about Śiva or his nature and is punctuated with an adverbial participle (which I translate in the present tense) signifying praise. The length of this final section is longer than the

autobiographical portion we read above. One interpretation is that the previous portion sets up the audience for the latter: he documents his life, he tells of the glory of Śiva and Śaivism, he explains what happens to him in worship; and then we are presented with this section of the hymn, in which it seems he is demonstrating the appropriate mode of worship for his audience. Let us now turn to a sample of the concluding section:

> You became a mother and raised me. I extol You!
> You became the knower who gives true knowledge;
> You, Great God, are capable of helping to eradicate karma. I extol You!
> The king of golden Madurai. I extol You! 90
> The highest guru, shining, in Kūṭal. I extol You![226]
> Dancer on the stage in south Tillai. I extol You!
> You have become full ambrosia today. I extol You!
> The greatest of the four imperishable Vedas. I extol You!
> Śiva, who has a victorious banner of a beautiful bull. I extol You! 95
> You take various forms, with the form of full lightning. I extol You!
> O Sweet One, You peeled fiber from the stone. I extol You![227]
> You, Golden Hill, protect me. I extol You!
> O Grace me! I extol You!
> You create, sustain, and destroy. I extol You! 100
> Father, You weed out my troubles. I extol You!
> Lord, I extol You! God, I extol You!
> You are a collection of lustrous crystals. I extol You!
> King, I extol You! Ambrosia, I extol You!
> You of many forms, whose feet has a beautiful fragrance. I extol You! 105
> I extol You, who knows all! I extol You, who is without blemish!
> You, who are the beginning, I extol You! I extol You, who is knowledge!
> I extol You, who is my path! You, who are sweet, I extol You!
> I extol You, O God, whose red matted hair is the river!
> You possess me, I extol You! I extol You, the Great Realization![228] 110
> You saw me as a devotee, who was the lowest. I extol You!

[226] The exact translation of *kuru maṇi* is 'ruby guru;' but the nuance suggests the 'highest' or 'best.' Thus, I have chosen to forgo an exact translation to capture the nuance.

[227] *Kal nār uritta* ('who strips fiber from stone') is an idiomatic phrase. Since it is not possible to strip fiber from stone, Māṇikkāvacakar uses this image to describe his conversion to Śaivism. The nuance here is that he was a recalcitrant person not necessarily willing to become a devotee. Thus, Śiva achieved the impossible, like stripping fiber from a stone.

[228] The term *uṇarvu* is a philosophical term indicating what the five senses awaken to when they are detached from the mundane world. It is the 'Great Realization.' The term *mey aṟivu* has a similar philosophical nuance.

> I extol You, who is the largest! I extol You, who is the smallest!
> You are the best of Śaivas. I extol You! I extol You, the leader!
> I extol You, who are the main goal! You are the totality
> of qualities, I extol You![229]

Similar to the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" above, the structure of this portion of the hymn provides a space for an ecstatic experience. It is the lack of a cohesive narrative, the obvious disjuncture that allows for such a demonstration. What is interesting is that Māṇikkavācakar (or anyone reciting the hymn) could stop at any particular line above and enter into a frenzied state with the requisite laughing, wailing, trembling, and so on; and then resume again at the appropriate moment. The issue here and above in the "Tiruvaṇṭappakuti" is the lack of a narrative. If Māṇikkavācakar were to interrupt the first part of the hymn, the autobiographical narrative would come unhinged from its overall structure. In the above excerpt, there is no cohesion per se. He is detailing Śiva's qualities, but theoretically, each line can stand alone. In other words, Māṇikkavācakar is not using a previous line as a stepping stone to introduce a different or new idea. There is a lot of space for improvisation in these sections in both hymns. While the list of epithets may seem redundant, I argue that, from a performative perspective, these portions may be the most creative because one has the option to take the hymn in multiple directions and is not bound by the constraints of the autobiographical narrative.

§ 3. RELAPSE AND LONGING

As I mentioned above, the setting of the *Tiruvācakam* is the mundane world, for it provides the arena in which the soul matures. Māṇikkavācakar implies that only through experiencing the world did he realize god, and in experiencing the effects of his

[229] The hymn continues on in a similar fashion for one hundred and eleven lines. The essence of the piece, I think, is conveyed without providing the remainder of the hymn.

transgressions did he realize the error of his ways. He frequently repents for the temptations he experienced before and after his conversion to Śaivism. It is clear, though, that when he composed the hymns he was fully aware of the consequences his transgressions would have on his spiritual progress. Thus, he constantly beseeches Śiva to impart his *aruḷ* so that the accrued *karma* (from current and previous births) would be eradicated and he would then be freed from delusion in the mundane world. What is also fascinating about the text is that Māṇikkavācakar suggests that receiving Śiva's *aruḷ* is only half the battle against ignorance. The other half must come from the soul as it negotiates the mundane world. Once it initially receives Śiva's *aruḷ* and is placed on the proper path, it is incumbent upon the actor not to confuse worldly temptations with proper knowledge. This situation only amplifies the tension between delusion and the proper knowledge that leads to liberation from rebirth.

In medieval Tamil Śaivism, the phenomenal, mundane world was very real, not illusory. This position differed from prominent philosophical opinions of the period, most notably that of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta (monism). Śaṅkara propounded that Brahman, the Absolute Spirit, is real, and all others (self, phenomenal world, and so on) are illusory, but appear real because of *māyā*. Generally speaking, in the Advaita Vedānta tradition, then, *māyā* is an energy that conceals the real, projecting the unreal as real.[230] Māṇikkavācakar does not refer to Śaṅkara specifically, though many claim that his reference to the term *māyāvādam* was, in fact, a reference to Advaita Vedānta.[231]

As Richard Davis points out, the hold that the fetters (*mālā*, *māyā*, and *karma*) have over a person can change through a combination of appropriate action and divine

[230] Lucetta Mowry, "The Theory of the Phenomenal World in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*," in *Experiencing Śiva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*, eds. Fred Clothey and J. Bruce Long (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1983), pp. 39-40.
[231] I discussed this in the Introduction to the Second Part, see p. 131.

grace.[232] Davis is specifically speaking of Śaiva ritual when he discusses appropriate action. Māṇikkavācakar, however, was not keen on the formalities and intricacies of Śaiva ritual; at least this is what is reflected in his compositions. Ritual for him was something other than specialized rites geared towards freeing the soul's innate capacities. For Māṇikkavācakar, loving devotion, particularly through composing and singing hymns, was the means through which Śiva's *aruḷ* would be experienced and the innate capcity of the soul would be unobstructed.

The phenomenal, mundane world, then, and the temptations therein provide the soul with the opportunity to mature; with maturation comes Śiva's *aruḷ*; and with his *aruḷ* comes liberation from the cycle of *saṃsāra*. What I find most fascinating and creative about the *Tiruvācakam* is that Māṇikkavācakar largely wrote about the maturation of the soul and the relationship of that process to the phenomenal world and Śiva's *aruḷ* indirectly.

The *Tiruvācakam* indicates that after his initiation into Śaivism, Māṇikkavācakar spent time at the temple in Uttarakōcamaṅkai in the service of Śiva. By his own admission, despite his initiation, the woman there mesmerized him. Pope has suggested that the cause of his temptations were the temple attendants;[233] but there is no way to substantiate this claim, as the hymns do not provide the necessary details to arrive at such a conclusion. In fact, it is quite plausible that Pope was merely reflecting the political reality of his time, as the British government was scrutinizing the *devadāsīs* (temple dancers), condemning their art because, they believed, the dancers were prostitues. All that Māṇikkavācakar describes are physical qualities of the women, and does not mention

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[232] Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, p. 25-6.
[233] G. U. Pope, *The Tiruvāçagam*, p. 85.

anything about dancers or attendant. Let us consider portions of the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam," the sixth hymn in the *Tiruvācakam*, that was composed at Uttarakōcamaṅkai.

The "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" has two hundred lines and is the third longest in the text. I have not provided the entire hymn below, but I do give sections to demonstrate Māṇikkavācakar's style of composition and the emotive texture of his works. Like many *bhakti* poems, this particular piece is an *antāti* (*anta*, "end"; *āti*, "beginning") poem, meaning that the last syllables of a verse are repeated in the first line of the following verse. Thus, the entire poem is a cycle, as the last syllables of the two hundredth line are repeated in the opening line of the poem; and within the poem itself, each of the verses are connected, creating smaller cycles that move forward to the end, which only begins again. While this is beautiful in Tamil, reproducing this in English is difficult.

> 2. Even though I am not forsaking women with blood-red lips and beautiful, large breasts that do not leave a space for a grain to fit between, will you abandon me? I am not outside, but inside your noble service. O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai! Even though like a thief I hide myself, why did you take and rule me?
>
> 3. Will you abandon me, who is rooted in women with beautiful eyes, like a tree on the bank of the river of five senses? You live in renown Ārūr; O King of well-established Uttarakōcamaṅkai! O You, a portion of the one whose breast is ornamented with cloth. You raised me!
>
> 5. Will you abandon me, who, like a moth entering a roaring flame, falls frequently for those of sweet speech? O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai! In your top-knot adorned with flowers, bees with honey-mouths burrow; even when you fed me with the nectar of your grace (*aruḷ*), having stood in my way, I refused!
>
> 8. Will you abandon me, who is troubled inside, thinking that You will solve my faults with Your sacred grace (*tīr aruḷ*)? O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai, the bells around Your garlanded Bull clang to frighten enemies. Fear and the five senses attract me, riddled with karma, in two directions.
>
> 9. Will you abandon me, a madman, who is separated from you like an ant on a stick burning at both ends? O King of well-established Uttarakōcamaṅkai! The Incomparable Leader of the expanded three worlds. You, the One who flourishes, raising a trident whose tip is for battle.

10. In enmity you burned the city of your enemies with a mighty, strong bow. O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai, with flower parks and the sound of the *viḷari* raga selected by the beetles. Will you abandon me, who yearns, having given up the five senses of the body,[234] and having obtained Your prosperous feet?

11. Will you abandon me, who has yet to attain Your jeweled feet, as the five enemies deceive me. O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai, You are honey that swells in my karma-laden soul. O Magnanimous One, by smearing the sacred ash, Your golden body radiates splendor.

12. O Magnanimous One, when you enslaved me, I abandoned you by following the five senses. Will you abandon me? O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai, whose powerful lance destroys and instills fear in enemies. You are a vast Sea of limpid Ambrosia, on which I, a harsh person, feed.

14. Like a person with a parched tongue in a great flood, having received Your grace (*aruḷ*), I am unable to separate from suffering. Will You abandon me? O King of well-established Uttarakōcamaṅkai, who is in the minds of the devotees who long for you. Bestow a joy not experienced before with grace (*aruḷ*) for me who is involved in falsehood.

27. Will you leave me, your servant who has fallen, lost control, having gone between the mountains of breasts of the women with beautiful smiles, who are like beautiful gems? O Pure Gem! Having mercifully taken me as yours, having placed me in the middle of congregated slaves who weep and whose whole bodies tremble. Show me again your feet that give knowledge!

28. Will You abandon me, who moves toward the false path, here, having been bewildered; I too was made to be confused by the senses. O Gracious One, you made the poison of the sea into ambrosia when all heaven and earth trembled. I, Your servant, am distressed. O Master, reverence of my heart!

29. My Father, whose victorious bow is Meru Mountain, will You abandon me? You eradicated my faults; You eradicated the group [of five]. You are incomparable—my Father whose body is like a beautiful lotus, whose garland of cassia glitters like gold. I am churned by the five senses like curds spun by a churning stick!

30. Will You abandon me, who lays seeds [for future births], having been churned, engulfed by the fire of the five senses, like cool curds by a churning

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[234] In this context the deep reading of the term *ākkaiyai* reveals the nuance to be referring to more than just the body, but to the desire for the body; *i.e.*, the five senses. Thus, I use the extended meaning here.

stick? O my Truth and Wealth, Who wears white skulls and clusters of flowers, who wears a garland of entrails and is adorned with white ash and covered with red sandalwood!

39. Will You abandon me, who karma helps; who behaves arrogantly while you, the unrivaled help, remains? O You, helper of my karma-filled soul! You are the source of my life! In difficult times, you are my savings! I can not tolerate the smallest amount of suffering of this body, which is like a strong net!

40. Will You abandon me, who waivers, having stared in bewilderment, caught by the glances of the women who have eyes like a deer trapped in a net. On Your head the crescent moon exists. O Gracious One! Lord of Mount Kayilāyam, Husband of the Mountain lady, Source of my life!

41. Will You abandon me, who trembles, having drowned in the hot water of desire for those of red lips like crocodiles? I will not bear this body, full of disease, flesh, and fat. O Śiva, is it fair? O Partner of the One whose jeweled breasts are flushed! O my Final Bliss!

46. Will you abandon me, who is desirous, like a fly in jackfruit, of the breasts of the women whose gaze is like a deer. If you leave, I will loudly blaspheme, calling You, whose throat is like a dark cloud from eating the poison in the oecan, "Virtueless," "Human being," "Bearer of the Crescent Moon," "The Oldest Wanderer."

This hymn may be read in several different ways. The first method of reading is an intuitive one. This suggestion is akin to Ratna Navaratnam's belief that the contents of this hymn are a result of Māṇikkavācakar's youth and spiritual immaturity.[235] We can indeed read the hymn as such, as the prominence of his existential, spiritual angst colors each verse; however, I argue that this type of reading remains superficial. This is not to say that an intuitive reading prevents us from understanding Māṇikkavācakar's plight. It certainly does; however, if we peer deeper into the hymn, what emerges is something far more complex than what a surface reading gives us.

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[235] Ratna Navaratnam, *A New Approach to Tiruvasagam*, pp. 85-98.

An intuitive reading reveals Māṇikkavācakar leading the audience through his personal torment, believing that Śiva has abandoned him for his transgressions. Much like *caṅkam* poetry, Māṇikkavācakar longs for his master's *aruḷ*. He makes it very clear that lust has thwarted his religious discipline and he realizes that he is in danger of Śiva abandoning him. Māṇikkavācakar beseeches Śiva to remain near to him, as near as in his heart. He demonstrates desperation as he showers Śiva with all manner of sobriquet. He has relapsed, so to speak, to a deluded state, and is pressing for an intervention so that he may return to the path of knowledge.

The "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" is indeed an evocative and moving piece of poetry. Each verse may be read as a self-contained unit because the structure is similar: in the first line or so, Māṇikkavācakar characterizes himself in a seemingly unfavorable, and sometimes, sarcastic light; halfway through the second line, he then poses a question to Śiva—*eṉṉai viṭuti kaṇṭāy* ("will you abandon me?);[236] and he follows this question with approximately two lines of laudatory epithets or descriptions of himself after initiation and prior to his transgressions. While reading each verse discretely is possible, much of the emotional rush is lost. One may take away a sense of the hymn's theme, but the real impact comes through reading the verses together and watching the *antāti* ("end-beginning") structure unite the verses and imagery. This is why I presented a large portion of the hymn. If one were to read only several verses, they would come away with a more tempered perspective. As the imagery intertwines, Māṇikkavācakar continuously mounts evidence against himself.

[236] Grammatically, this sentence is not in an interrogative format. *Kaṇṭāy* is conjugated in the second person singular (√*kaṇ*-to see; behold); however, in this context, posing a question seems more heartfelt than giving an exclamation. Throughout the course of the hymn, Māṇikkavācakar wavers on whether Śiva has actually abandoned him. Thus, reading the line this way seems to lend a greater (and desired) degree of angst to the piece.

Glenn Yocum has offered a second, somewhat unsuccessful reading of the hymn in categorizing this as a "philosophy by epithet." Yocum maintains that Māṇikkavācakar does not present a systematized philosophy in the *Tiruvācakam*, a philosophy rooted in logical argumentation.[237] In other words, Māṇikkavācakar held an inductive view of the world. Yocum's observation is somewhat correct. Māṇikkavācakar does employ a wide array of adjectives and nouns declined in the vocative when he refers to Śiva, some of which have precursors in *caṅkam* literature, some with a philosophical orientation, and others outlined in Śaiva *itikācam* (history). In using them, Māṇikkavācakar takes for granted their validity and the systems of thought that justify the epithets. It does not appear that the poet was concerned with deductive logic; however, I hesitate to label the totality of his cosmological and ontological vision as an inductive 'philosophy by epithet.'

There are indeed perspectives on Śiva's nature to gain if one groups all the vocative nouns together, reads them, and teases out a broader picture of how the author understood the deity. In the hymn, Māṇikkavācakar provides his audience with a host of laudatory epithets that describe Śiva in a variety of ways. Some are analogies or metaphors—the "sea of ambrosia" or "honey"—that speak of the bliss of focusing on Śiva rather than gratifying the senses; some describe the cosmic processes that Śiva undertakes, like eradicating the faults of the soul; others are iconographic descriptions that bring to mind Śaiva mythology, such as wearing the skull and entrails or possessing the crescent moon in his matted locks; and some even refer to specific events in mythology, such as turning the poisonous sea that threatened the world into ambrosia.

[237] Glenn Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva*, p. 149.

All of these different appellations serve to reinforce Śiva as a loving deity whose concern is for the liberation of souls through eradicating *karma*.

These are only a few epithets—there are numerous more throughout the entirety of the *Tiruvācakam*. Yocum provides detailed lists of Māṇikkavācakar's epithets; however, he seems only to categorize those with a philosophical orientation under the rubric 'philosophy by epithet.' He itemizes the various names used to describe Śiva as: soverign ruler, creater, destroyer, transcendent, unique, all-pervasive, eternal, and the unifier of opposites, such as good and bad. [238] What strikes me as inadequate in this approach is that such appellations are not unique to any one religio-philosophical tradition. The emphasis on one concept may vary depending on the tradition, but basically the categories are similar. Yocum suggests that from this list a clearer image of Śiva may be construed; and the perspective that he takes away is that Śiva's *viḷaiyāṭal* or sport (Skt. *līlā*) is the unifying feature. The spontaneity and erratic behavior, he argues, present an image of Śiva as acting not out of purpose, nor out of a sense of justice or righteousness.[239]

I disagree with the way in which Yocum uses the term 'philosophy.' Much philosophy circumvents a deductive, logical approach to conclusions. The Zen *koan* comes to mind; as do the writings ascribed to the ancient Chinese philosophers Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu; and what of the German aphorist Freidrich Nietzsche? Although some may disagree, philosophy is not necessarily deductive logic, but may attempt to bring about certain conclusions regarding the world by means of altering meaning of words or context in ways that forces one to question the means by which knowledge is known. Such an approach is not popular in continental philosophy; but has a long and

[238] Glenn Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva*, pp. 149-57.
[239] *Ibid*., 149-57.

distinguished career in traditions beyond the "west." Nonetheless, I mention this not to recommend Māṇikkavācakar for membership in the philosophers' club. There is some doubt he would fit in. But I do believe that Māṇikkavācakar was an apologist for the Śaiva philosophical and mythological perspectives.

In addition to an intuitive reading, I believe that we can simultaneously read the hymn with two seemingly opposing perspectives, that is with both a philosophical and a mythological approach. Reading the hymn with two separate lenses reveals not only the creativity of the poet, but also the inner complexity, and often, incongruity of Śaiva philosophy and mythology. On the one hand, it appears that Māṇikkavācakar is being didactic in this hymn. In other words, in confessing his overwhelming desire for women and his transgressions, we can see the different effects that ignorance has on the soul. The Śaiva Siddhāntins (both the Tamil and pan-Hindu systems) parsed and cataloged the effects of ignorance into seven sub-categories, each of which provides different spiritual damage. As I mentioned above, using a Siddhāntin interpretive lens is anachronistic; however, I do believe that these seven effects are present in the hymn despite their being systematized in a possibly later tradition.

A different way to read the hymn is with a mythological eye. Śiva's nature is one of outward paradox, but inner continuity. In *Śiva—The Erotic Ascetic*, Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty) analyzes the paradoxical nature of Śiva as being both a celibate ascetic and a husband who engages in sexual activity. In Hindu mythology, these opposites, Doniger argues, are perceived as being in an essential relationship with one another. Śiva has many different roles, and the different aspects of his nature manifest in certain contexts. In fact, *tapas* ('heat' or 'asceticism'), as accrued through austere practice, is similar to *kāma* ('desire'), in that they are both forms of heat and not mutually exclusive. For a

devotee, these contradictions are not an issue, for Śiva is regarded as complete despite his seeming paradoxical nature.[240]

Interestingly, Māṇikkavācakar does not primarily emphasize Śiva's erotic nature. He does occasionally allude to Śiva's love play with his wife; however, given the paradoxical nature of the deity briefly highlighted above, it is remarkable that Māṇikkavācakar chose not to expand on Śiva's erotic tendencies. He inserts an erotic line here and there. For example, in the fourteenth and fifteenth lines of the "Kīrttitiruvakaval," he states, "*kirāta vētamoṭu kiñcukam vāy avaḷ/virāvu koṅkai naltaṭam paṭintum*" (trans. "with a hunter's appearance he [Śiva] played with the great-expanding breasts of the woman with a flower-like mouth."). This is the only explicit mention of Śiva's erotic nature in the 182 lines of the hymn.

In the verses from the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" above, Māṇikkavācakar depicts Śiva as both an ascetic and a husband. In the thirtieth verse, he describes Śiva as one who "wears white skulls and clusters of flowers, who wears a garland of entrails and is adorned with white ash and covered with red sandalwood." This is an obvious reference to Śiva as an ascetic. In the fortieth verse, Māṇikkavācakar refers to Śiva as "Lord of Mount Kayilāyam, Husband of the Mountain lady"; in the forty-first verse, he refers to Śiva as the "Partner of the One whose jeweled breasts are flushed." Śiva's ambiguous nature does not concern Māṇikkavācakar in the least. In his compositions, however, he seems to be focusing primarily on Śiva's saving nature.

There are several ways of interpreting Māṇikkavācakar's acknowledgment of his weakness for women. It could be an autobiographical, uncomplicated confession of his transgressions in the hope that he receives absolution. This interpretation stems from an

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[240] Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, pp. 4-37.

intuitive reading: it is straightforward and superficial; yet it provides insight into the difficulty of curbing desire. He could also be recounting these transgressions for the sake of his audience, speaking didactically about the nature of desire and ignorance; perhaps he did not commit transgressions at all! We will return to this below because I believe the didactic element is indeed present; or perhaps, he is imitating Śiva's erotic nature as a means to move closer to him. It is difficult to understand why Māṇikkavācakar was prone to temptation as an ascetic. This view offers resolution for the incongruity in Māṇikkavācakar's personality as a *bhakta*: he surmounts and succumbs to temptation. I argue that one can simultaneously hold these three interpretations of this hymn (or four if one chooses to utilize Yocum's "philosophy of ephithet"). First, let us consider the suggestion that Māṇikkavācakar is imitating Śiva's erotic nature.

§ 3.1 Imitation of Śiva

The ritual imitation of Śiva is a practice that was undertaken by certain Śaiva groups to achieve the powers Śiva possessed or as a means to be closer to him by imitating him. Among the Śaiva ascetic groups that adopted imitation of Śiva as part of their religious practice were the Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, and Lākulas, among others. In *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas—Two Lost Śaivite Sects*, David Lorenzen discusses the extreme practices of the Kāpālikas or "skull-men," a Śaivite ascetic group dating perhaps to the early centuries of the common era, but whose presence was well-attested to by the sixth and seventh centuries.[241] In religious practice, the Kāpālikas ritually performed the penance for killing a member of the Brahmin caste. This penance was undertaken in

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[241] David Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects* (Berkely and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1972), pp. 13-14. See also Alexis Sanderson, "Śaivism and the Tantric Tradition," in In *The Religions of Asia*, ed. Friedhelm Hardy (London: Routledge, 1988) for an analysis of medieval Śaiva ascetic groups who imitated Śiva in religious praxis.

imitation of Śiva, who performed penance to expiate the sin of beheading Brahmā.[242] In the *Matsya Purāṇa* version of the tale, after decapitation, Brahmā's head attaches itself to Śiva's hand and does not fall off until, after wandering to many *tīrthas* ("fords"; "pilgrimage sites"), Śiva arrives in Vārānāsī at the Kapālamocana ("Setting Free of the Skull") *tīrtha*, where the skull dislodges from Śiva's hand.[243] Thus, the Kāpālikas used a human skull for their begging bowl. As Lorenzen argues, in imitation, these ascetics became ritually "homologised" with Śiva, and thus, gained some of his divine attributes. They also undertook other penances associated with the killing of brahmin as outlined in the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* and other law books.[244]

One difference between Kāpālikas and the other Śaiva groups mentioned above and the Tamil Śaiva *bhaktas* was the former's emphasis on ritual; the Kāpālikas and Lākulas, for instance, ritually created the homology between themselves and Śiva. They also made offerings of meat and alcohol, among other things considered ritually impure in orthodox circles. At least as their literature reflects, the Śaiva *bhaktas* used devotion as a means of transformation, not ritual. There is no evidence in the *Tiruvācakam* that Māṇikkavācakar ritually transformed himself into Śiva. Perhaps his devotional practice provided the transformation he required.

The Kāpālikas and other such groups that ritually imitated Śiva are represented in literature and epigraphy in Tamilnadu during the seventh century, two centuries prior to Māṇikkavācakar.[245] There is no evidence that I can see within the *Tiruvācakam* that

[242] There is a bit of uncertainty on Lorenzen's part about whether the myth predates the groups; or whether the groups invented the myth to legitimate their observances. As he argues, however, the answer is rather immaterial, for the importance lies in its adoption by the Kāpālikas in later centuries. See Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.
[243] For an detailed account of this myth, see Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, pp. 123-128.
[244] David Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-82.
[245] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

suggests Māṇikkavācakar was influenced by the Kāpālikas; however, earlier Śaiva *nāyaṉmār*—Appar and Campantar, two authors of the *Tēvāram*—mention in passing the Kāpālikas and other extreme ascetic groups. Their practices were known in Tamilnadu. The Kāpālikas also appear in a seventh century Tamil play, the *Mattavilāsa*, and epic, the *Maṇimekalai*.[246] What is of interest here is not the extreme practices that the Kāpālikas undertook—using a human skull for a begging bowl, for instance; although in the fortieth hymn, the "Kulappattu," Māṇikkavācakar does refer to Śiva's skull as his "kin"—but the imitation of Śiva.

There are a few references of Māṇikkavācakar imitating Śiva within the text. He frequently describes himself as covered with ash. Recall verse eleven in the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam": "O Magnanimous One, by smearing the sacred ash, Your golden body radiates splendor." In covering himself in sacred ash, he presents himself as an imitation of Śiva. Māṇikkavācakar is a self-proclaimed lunatic or madman (*pittaṉ*) and demonstrates behavior that classifies him as such, as the public's derision of him that we saw above would suggest; he describes Śiva in exactly the same terms.[247] Perhaps the most interesting instance of imitation occurs in the "Tiruvammāṉai." Māṇikkavācakar states that he will wear the cassia wreath, and in doing so, will be able to join himself to Śiva's mighty arm. In the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam," Māṇikkavācakar provides a description of Śiva's body with such a wreath: "Father, whose body is like a beautiful lotus, whose garland of cassia glitters like gold." He suggests that donning the garland of cassia flowers will allow him to move closer to Śiva. In these few examples, we see that

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[246] *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.

[247] There are multiple instances throughout the *Tiruvācakam* that describe Śiva as a lunatic or madman. See, for instance, hymns 11, 12, 26, 30, 37, and 41.

Māṇikkavācakar imitates Śiva not only in external appearance, but also demonstrates behavior associated with a lunatic, which is associated with Śiva.

In imitating Śiva's erotic nature, Māṇikkavācakar would have theoretically succumbed to temptation, if in fact he did. Since there is no mateial evidence to corroborate Māṇikkavācakar's admitted escapades, it is possible that such mention in the hymns had alternative motives. Māṇikkavācakar was indeed aware of Śiva's erotic side and he himself displayed the paradox of being erotic and being a renunciant. The difference between Śiva and Māṇikkavācakar, of course, is summed up in the difference between human and divine spheres. Śiva's reaction to his own paradoxical nature is much more tempered than Māṇikkavācakar's statements of self-degredation.[248] Confused by his behavior and the power of desire, Māṇikkavācakar repents for his transgressions and assures Śiva that he is not outside of his service. In reviewing the text as a whole, it does not appear that he was ever outside Śiva's service, even in lapse. If one were to read the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" in isolation, one may assume that the author's fall is irredeemable, that his transgressions have indeed stymied his spiritual growth. Hindu mythology is populated by ascetics who succumb to sensual pleasure, some of whom provide literary models for Śaiva mythology, such as Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.[249] In fact, as Doniger has repeatedly pointed out, ascetic practices (*tapas*) were frequently undertaken for the purpose of obtaining sexual fulfillment.[250] Māṇikkavācakar, however, rarely mentions the building up of *tapas* in the *Tiruvācakam*. Apart from singing and entering into ecstatic trances, it is difficult to know what other practices he may have undertaken.

[248] Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[249] Ṛṣyaśṛṅga appears in several different myths, most of which, as Doniger (O'Flaherty) argues, share the same basic structure. Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, the sage with a horn, is seduced by an *apsaras* or celestial dancer. See *ibid.*, pp. 42-52.
[250] *Ibid*., pp. 64-70.

If this hymn is read in conjunction with other hymns in the text, a different image emerges. Consider, for instance, a selection of the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval" that we saw previously:

> I survived the captivation of the sharp eyes
> of women with black hair, 30
> red lips, and white teeth, whose appearance
> is like a peacock in the rainy season;
> of their breasts, pressed together, blooming full inside,
> standing up, the *kaccu* cloth
> breaking, spreading radiance; as the breasts expand at the top,
> the waists of the
> women grow tired, they suffer; their breasts
> having risen, sides expanding,
> so the midrib of a palm leaf could not be placed
> between them. 35

Following this and other descriptions that tempt him away from Śiva, Māṇikkavācakar claims that he clings to the highest path. Now consider the second verse from the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" above:

> Even though I am not forsaking women with blood-red lips
> and beautiful, large breasts
> that do not leave a space for a grain to fit between. Will you abandon me? I am not outside, but inside your noble service. O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai! Even though like a thief I hide myself,
> why did you take and rule me?

The similarity in imagery in these two excerpts is striking: Māṇikkavācakar's detail regarding women's breasts is virtually the same—neither the midrib of a palm leaf nor an individual piece of grain can fit between them. On the other hand, the difference between these two examples is that in the first Māṇikkavācakar triumphs over temptation; in the second he does not. When we read the hymns together, then, we see an ambiguity

in regard to his ascetic personality: he is both chaste and prurient, much like Śiva's mythological persona. What is difficult not to notice in the first excerpt above is the detailed description of the women: a considerable amount of reflection, it seems, went into that particular portrayal. Even in those moments of surmounting temptation, controlling the five senses, Māṇikkavācakar still makes allusions to the erotic.

Another similarity between both the passages is that Māṇikkavācakar claims to be always in Śiva's service. The first example is the easiest to understand: Māṇikkavācakar overcomes desire and clings to the path that brings proper knowledge. In the second passage this is more difficult to reconcile. Māṇikkavācakar tells Śiva that he is in his noble service, despite the fact that he has not abandoned "women with blood-red lips and beautiful, large breasts." The question that arises, then, is how can he simultaneously be in Śiva's service and succumb to temptation. There is not a simple, logical answer to this question. Māṇikkavācakar frequently chastises himself above for giving into the five senses; however, he also seems ambivalent about the effects of his transgressions. Consider verse eleven from the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam":

> Will you abandon me, who has yet to attain Your jeweled feet, as the five enemies
> deceive me? O King of Uttarakōcamaṅkai, You are honey that swells in my
> karma-laden soul. O Magnanimous One, by smearing the sacred ash,
> Your golden body radiates splendor.

We see here that Māṇikkavācakar is concerned about his transgressions. The deceit of the "five enemies" prevents him from attaining Śiva's jeweled feet. He wavers, then, between satisfaction and regret for his decision, as if he was not fully comfortable with his dual personality. To qualify this suggestion, consider the forty-sixth verse:

> Will you abandon me, who is desirous, like a fly in jackfruit, for the breasts
> of the women whose gaze is like a deer. If you leave, I will loudly blaspheme,
> calling You, whose throat is like a dark cloud from eating the poison in the oecan,

"Virtueless," "Human being," "Bearer of the Crescent Moon," "The Oldest Wanderer."

Using blackmail as praise is an interesting tactic indeed. In this verse, the poet informs Śiva that, despite his desire, if he abandons him, he (Māṇikkavācakar) will slander him. Māṇikkavācakar's attitude regarding his lust seems flippant. It is difficult to reconcile these four different images of him above: he survives temptation; he gives in to desire; he is concerned about his transgressions; and, as we saw in the last excerpt, he is quite glib about his lapses. I reiterate again that envisioning Māṇikkavācakar as imitating Śiva's erotic nature as a means to move closer to him makes sense and reconciles his incongruity. He never explicitly claims to be imitating Śiva but, as the examples I cited above show, I believe that he did utilize this technique.

§ 3.2 A Didactic Reading of the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam"

Let us now turn to a didactic reading of the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam." As I mentioned above, using aspects of the Śaiva Siddhānta systematization is anachronistic; however, I do believe it can be a useful tool in unlocking elements of the *Tiruvācakam*. If we can dislocate the text from the view that the text is merely filled with Māṇikkavācakar's outpourings, then a different image emerges. As I demonstrated, I think there is little doubt that Māṇikkavācakar was aware of Siddāntin theology as found in the *āgamas*. Now whether he imported Siddhāntin theology into the *Tiruvācakam* is not known. I argue, however, that the Siddhāntin ideas on ignorance do appear in the text, particularly when we read between the lines. In this way, then, Māṇikkavācakar's lamentations regarding his transgressions can be seen also as a didactic tool.

Let us turn now to Nirampavaḻakiya Tecikar's commentary on the second verse of Umāpati's third chapter in the *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ*, "Iruṇmalanilai" ("Condition of the Defilement of Darkness"):

Umāpati's verse: iruḷāṉa taṉṟi yiltevaiyu mēkap poruḷāki niṟkum poruḷ

Translation: Everything having become one matter, stands as one matter, which is nothing but darkness.

Tecikar's Commentary: In a night of pitch darkness, if there is a wall on the path, that wall will not appear as a wall. Travelers will hit their head on the wall. If there is a well, since it does not appear as a well, they fall into the well. If a snake lies inactive, it does not appear as a snake, they will be bitten, having stepped on it. In this way, the object, which is the form of darkness, conceals the objects' nature. Since the nature of pati ('god'), paśu ('souls'), and pāśa ('fetters') are concealed, it is inferred that there should be an object like darkness that conceals them. This object is called āṇavam. Having concealed the sorrows of birth, having illustrated this as happiness, āṇavam leads the soul to karma, which is the cause for that suffering. Having concealed the great happiness of liberation, having illustrated it as sorrow, it blocks souls access on the path. Having hidden the great grace of god, it confuses, creating for the soul *akantai* ("I-ness") and *mamatai* ("Me-ness").

The qualities of āṇavam: mōkam (confusion), matam (infatuation), rākam (love), viṣātam (despondency), cōṣam (drying; but extended meaning is suffering caused by attachment), vaicittiriyam (delusion), aricam (joy, pleasure).[251] Mōkam confuses good knowledge.[252] Matam makes one regard worldly pleasures as the highest.[253] Rākam creates the desire in worldly pleasure.[254] Viṣātam causes suffering at the time when a pleasure that has been experienced is not obtained later. Cōṣam causes the body to emaciate having caused grief at the time when one should leave their loved ones. Vaicitiriyam causes the soul to delight, having praised the greatness of himself, placing its own faults on god. Aricam makes the soul think that for itself there is no imperfection when experiencing worldly pleasures.

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[251] These seven qualities of *āṇavam* are similar to the seven defilements listed in the *Pauṣkarāgama*. *Moha* is regarded in this text as the natural one of the seven, and gives rise to the other six. Those other six are: *mada*, *rāga*, *viṣāda*, *tāpa*, *śoṣa* and *vaicitrya*. From this commentary, though not explicit, it seems to follow suit.

[252] *Mōkam* decreases logical thinking. The means begin to lose importance and the ends become the most important, e.g. the desire for wealth. *Mōkam* takes a person out of themselves. Heartbreak is a good example. It distracts one from their purpose and they lose control of themselves.

[253] *Matam* can be regarded as an intoxicant of sorts, intoxication with the pleasures of the senses. It is closer to greed.

[254] *Rākam* helps the soul derive more and more pleasure in the world.

The source of ignorance is *āṇavam*, which translates as 'ego'; but in Tamil Siddhāntin theology, it is an eternal substance that adheres to the soul and prevents proper knowledge. The list of the seven effects found in Tecikar's commentary are identical to those in the *Pauṣkarāgama*, on which Umāpati wrote a commentary. [255] What is of interest, of course, is how these categories are visible within the "Nīttal Viṇṇappam" above, and indeed, the text as a whole.

As Māṇikkavācakar alludes, in order to rid the soul of delusion, it is necessary for a soul to act in the world, to experience the fruits of *karma*. From this experience the soul slowly awakens to its defiled condition and begins the process of counteracting the negative effects with the help of Śiva's *aruḷ*. In the above verses, Māṇikkavācakar demonstrates these seven effects. He is confused about proper knowledge (*mōkam*) because he allowed the power of the senses to veil the path of knowledge from him; he regarded worldly pleasures as the highest (*matam*), and thus, sought refuge not in Śiva, but in the arms of women for immediate gratification; and because of this gratification, he longed to experience it again (*rākam*). He admits above that, during that period, although he wanted to abandon his desire for worldly pleasure, he was unable to do so. Māṇikkavācakar admits to his weakness when he asks in verse five whether or not Śiva will abandon him despite his falling for those of sweet words. In this particular case, he

[255] The one difference between the two lists is the origin of ignorance. While this is not the place for an exposition on the differences between the Tamil and Sanskrit traditions, suffice it to say that the Sanskrit Siddhāntin tradition reflected in the *Pauṣkarāgama* posited *mōha* or confusion as the root defilement, and the remaining six are born of it. For the Tamil Siddhāntins, *āṇavam* is the natural defilement. In the Tamil tradition, *āṇavam* is an eternal, sludge-like substance that adheres to the soul, preventing it from acquiring proper awareness. Ultimately, Śiva's *aruḷ* burns *āṇavam*, rendering it impotent so that it will not return after the soul has entered the state of *mukti*. In positing *āṇavam* as the natural defilement, the Tamil Siddhāntins were able to answer the question that, if *mōha* is the natural defilement, from which the six others arise, where does confusion come from? Ignorance? If so, what causes ignorance? For a discussion on the *Pauṣkarāgama* see, Pandit K. Ramachandra Sarma, ed. *Pauṣkarāgama* (Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Center, 1995), pp. v-xii; and for an overview of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta, see H.W. Schomerus, *Śaiva Siddhānta: An Indian School of Mystical Thought*. Trans. Mary Law (Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000).

seems to allude to attempting to avoid the suffering that comes when a pleasure experienced is not obtained again (*viṣātam*). Māṇikkavācakar's transgressions point to the fact that, in the moments when he was experiencing worldly pleasure, he did not think that there was anything wrong with his actions (*aricam*). This explains why his transgressions appear to have been on multiple occasions. The final and most glaring similarity between these verses and the Siddhāntin list is *vaicitiriyam*. This particular element of delusion makes the soul delight, placing the faults on god. The refrain in the hymn is 'will you abandon me.' In this way, Māṇikkavācakar suggests that the reason for his fall is that Śiva has abandoned him. He places the blame for his actions on Śiva's shoulders, and he longs for Śiva to return so that he may once again be placed on the path of proper knowledge. Māṇikkavācakar is confused in thinking that he has been abandoned.

In Mānikkavāckar's emotional wavering, in his agony and ecstasy, he becomes an exemplar of how a soul must traverse the effects of actions in order to realize the path of knowledge. I read this hymn both didactically and intuitively, for they may overlap. This is a very instructional work, providing for the audience an image of what a person will feel like and the pain they will suffer if they do not treasure Śiva's gift of *aruḷ*.

§ 4. CONCLUSION

When we follow Māṇikkavācakar through the *Tiruvācakam*, we are forced to confront a world of motion. It is present in virtually every aspect of the text. The most poignant examples of this are seen in Māṇikkavācakar's emotional instability. He wavers, almost manically, between states of elation and agony. As a reader, it is jarring to be a voyeur to his suffering and anguish; however, Māṇikkavācakar's vacillation between extreme ends of the emotional spectrum gives us a unique insight into Śaiva

theology. If we look between the slats of his torment and ecstasy, we are able to see many Śaiva principles in operation.

There are other elements of the text that direct our attention toward this world of movement. Because of his *aruḷ*, Śiva, for instance, manifests in the mundane world to assist his slaves in achieving proper knowledge. In addition to proclaiming his gratitude for Śiva becoming present in shrines and temples, Māṇikkavācakar also recounts mythological episodes to bolster Śiva's superiority. As he narrates, we follow Śiva through mythscapes as he acts in the world for the benefit of souls.

Māṇikkavācakar is not only an ardent *aṭiyār* or slave of Siva, but also a philanderer who pleads for redemption. He describes himself as unworthy, as lower than a *nāy* or dog (62 times in 3,327 lines, to be exact). If this is not enough, Māṇikkavācakar also catalogues himself as a lunatic, as a madman, who is beyond the fringes of society. Then in moments of clarity he bounces back, describing himself as one who would never waver from the path of true knowledge. He details his induction onto the path of knowledge by Śiva, tells of his mental discipline; and then he describes in lush detail the seduction of the five senses, particularly in regard to temptations of the flesh. How does *aruḷ* fit into all of this?

The *Tiruvācakam* presents an image of the concept quite unlike what we saw in the *caṅkam* poetry. The theological considerations are the most obvious categorical shifts. One crucial element that is similar, however, is the transformation that *aruḷ* brings to the recipient. The actors in the *caṅkam* works all longed for *aruḷ* to alter their current reality. The same holds true in the Śaiva context. Māṇikkavācakar indeed beseeches Śiva to free him from the delusion of the five senses. Where *aruḷ* radically changes in the Śaiva context is its metaphysical signification—Śiva's *aruḷ* spawned the cosmos and is the source for freeing the soul from bondage.

There are two interesting and somewhat contradictory depictions of *aruḷ* in the text. On the one hand, Māṇikkavācakar frequently describes *aruḷ* overwhelming his body and he loses control of his thoughts, his speech, his bodily functions—he rolls around weeping and laughing, singing and worshipping, while the hair bristles on his body. He claims that upon seeing Śiva's feet he is liberated. On the other hand, and what I find most theologically interesting, is the implication that receiving Śiva's *aruḷ* is not necessarily going to free his soul from bondage. This realization on his part elicits the emotional outpourings that the *Tiruvācakam* is known for. As I conveyed above, he frequently mentions that he has received it and yet laments that he still remains tethered to mundane reality. "Is it fair?" he asks. "When will I die?"

This second depiction suggests a crucial endeavor on the part of the soul. Since the mundane world is a very real place, the soul must engage in activities that promote proper realization of its true nature. The difficulty is that the soul is trapped in the body, and the body is the seat of the senses. As Māṇikkavācakar describes, the senses have an amazing influence over the soul because immediate pleasure is given preference over renunciation and struggle on the path to awakening.

While what I present above is a relatively few number of lines in comparison to the entirety of the text, these lines, I think, defines its core. We saw a person who is attempting to present a complex theological doctrine in the form of devotional hymns. The tension that emerges in a triad among the soul, the mundane world, and Śiva's *aruḷ* is quite intense; and it forces Māṇikkavācakar to long for the maturation of his soul so that the guilt from neglecting Śiva's *aruḷ* will also be nullified. In this regard, we witnessed an emotional turmoil beyond anything we saw in the *caṅkam* corpus.

Chapter Four: Memory and Experience—the Grammatical and Semantic Breadth of *Aruḷ* in the *Tiruvācakam*

The primary goal in this chapter is to expose *aruḷ*'s grammatical and semantic latitude. By the time of Māṇikkavācakar, the concept had been reverberating with a religious tenor for more than three centuries. In the world of Tamil Śaiva *bhakti*, *aruḷ* generally refers to that aspect of Śiva's nature that spawned the cosmos and phenomenal world and brings to a soul spiritual release from *saṃsāra* or rebirth. The fifty-one hymns of the *Tiruvācakam* provide an excellent source for understanding the semantic range of aruḷ in the Śaiva bhakti tradition. As I mentioned above, Māṇikkavācakar used the term in more than 360 instances in the 3,327 lines throughout the text; and given the length of the text, proportionately this number far exceeds its appearance in the hymns of the earlier *nāyaṉmār*.[256] The *Tiruvācakam*, then, opens for the reader a space to understand better the etymological development of the term and its theological implications for the Śaiva community.

We must first ask the question, why *aruḷ*? What was the cultural significance of the term that encouraged the *nāyaṉmār* to adopt and use it as a central theological tenet? As we saw in the preceding chapters, aruḷ played a very dynamic and significant role in caṅkam poetry, defining classical Tamil kingship and the relationship between a lover and beloved. In my opinion, the answers to these questions are situated within these two contexts, and its adoption speaks to the cultural history of the term. Having answered these questions, we then turn to the second part of this chapter. The interest here is Māṇikkavācakar's grammatical use of the term in the *Tiruvācakam*. This chapter, then, is

[256] Tiruñāṉacampantar used *aruḷ* 447 times in approximately the 16,880 lines that comprise the first three books of the *Tirumuṟai*; and Cuntaramūrtti used *aruḷ* in 163 instances in the approximately 4,200 lines of the 7th book of the Tamil Śaiva canon. These numbers pale in comparison to Māṇikkavācakar's usage (360 times) in the 3,327 lines of the *Tiruvācakam*.

more concerned with philology than with the actual substance of the hymns. In other words, I am concerned here with understanding how Māṇikkavācakar used nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* in his compositions. The preceding chapter was concerned with the substance of Māṇikkavācakar's hymns and arranged, I believe, the foundation for the current chapter. Now that we understand how Māṇikkavācakar described the workings of aruḷ, we must turn to his language to gain a better insight into the "divinity" present in Tamil language. Generally speaking, he used various grammatical forms of aruḷ in two separate but interrelated ways. I group these forms into two categories: memory (*niṉaivu*) and experience (*aṉupavam*). To a practicing Śaiva, such categorizations may seem trivial; but Māṇikkavācakar knew *aruḷ* to be a very complex, dynamic principle and employed it in these ways in an attempt to make sense of what he described as unknowable.

The space within both categories is filled with subcategories that, when viewed holistically, provide a larger vision of Māṇikkavācakar's understanding of the theology of *aruḷ*. It must be stated at the outset that Māṇikkavācakar was not a philosopher in the proper sense. His concern was not to theorize about the building blocks of the cosmos or the specific conditions necessary for the emancipation of the soul, offering a point by point refutation of some intellectual opponent's system of thought. He was a mystic, a label that signifies different things to different people. I use it here to refer to a person who lyrically documented the insight he gained on his personal, spiritual journey for liberation from suffering the cycle of *saṃsāra* and presented these compositions as offerings. He did present a philosophy of sorts. This was more of a loose theology that must be understood in conjunction with his oscillating emotions. He led by example, however, as his hagiography implies, and for his audience he embodied ignorance and knowledge, doubt and certainty—basically, all those hills and valleys that a human being

must cross on the quest for enlightenment. But he was a spiritual exemplar to others, ultimately revealing a path (that was shown to him previously) that would lead a person away from earthly bondage and to union with Śiva.

In the category of *ni̱naivu* or memory, I place all references to *aruḷ* designating acts of creation; cosmic and heroic deeds recounted in *itikācam* (history; Skt. *itihāsa*) particularly from the history later codified in the *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* (ca. twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE) and the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* (ca. sixteenth-eighteenth centuries CE), recounting the sixty-four sports of Śiva at Maturai; Śiva's arrival on earth, particularly in a shrine or temple; mannerisms in iconographic descriptions; and the revelation of the *ākama* texts (Skt. *āgama*).257 The details of this first group reflect an objective knowledge on the nature of divinity. The history of Śiva's deeds in the cosmic and mundane realities, suggesting simultaneous transcendence beyond and manifestation as the myriad, provides the means for beginning to contemplate Śiva's essence.

The concern here is with *aruḷ*'s relationship with the Tamil Śaiva tradition and particularly, Māṇikkavācakar's vision of *aruḷ*'s place in that tradition. I use the term tradition to refer to a codified collective, social knowledge and practice. The information that is drawn upon is in the public domain. It is accessible through listening to or reading mythology, philosophy, or theology. It is inscribed on temple walls. It is heard in song and performed in ritual and dance. It is also visible in iconographic depictions of Śiva or his devotees, whether carved or painted on a temple wall or free-standing. Collectively,

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[257] Theologically, the *ākama*-s are considered *śruti* or revelation; however, for the purposes here, I group them under the heading of *ni̱naivu* because the content of these liturgical texts provides a backdrop for Māṇikkvācakar to understand and experience Śiva.

these different media and genres play a significant role in Śaiva identity formation and provide the intellectual and emotional foundation for experiencing the divine.

The second group, *a̱nupavam*, offers perspective on the lived effect of Māṇikkavācakar's direct and indirect experiences of Śiva's *aruḷ*. Under this heading, *aruḷ* is associated with: the effect of Śiva's love for souls, which results in spiritual enslavement; Śiva's accessibility to his devotees; Śiva generating *āṉantam* or bliss in his devotees; proper knowledge, which is the highest spiritual path; and the cause for the eradication of negative karma and the soul's liberation from the cycle of *saṃsāra*.

The latitude with which Māṇikkavācakar uses the term *aruḷ*, on the one hand, shows how meaning may be undermined within a particular text. He uses various forms of *aruḷ* in such a way that it simultaneously indicates subject and object. In other words, Māṇikkavācakar uses forms of the term to indicate not only Śiva, but also verbally to signify the act of giving of its nominal counterpart. It is both signifier and signified. This deconstruction of the term, on the other hand, reveals that its semantics are intimately bound to cultural and theological considerations. While making such a claim places one in danger of having to qualify (ad infinitum) the standards by which a text is interpreted, philology assists us in showing that there are multiple ways to interpret a text; rather than descending into relativism, philology reveals the fragile structure upon which meaning is erected. There is no one absolute interpretation of a text because interpretive lenses and standards vary depending on time and place. However, where philology falters in this instance is adequately explaining why this term has the ability to be so dynamic, designating a host of disparate actions and concepts. Thus, in order to engage this issue the theological and cultural underpinnings of the term must also be examined. This chapter concludes, then, with questioning how a term such as *aruḷ*, a term so theologically loaded, might be rendered in translation. We will engage several

prior approaches to translation that, in my opinion, inadequately reveal the dynamism of the term.

§ 1. *ARUḶ* IN MEMORY

In adopting the term aruḷ to describe Śiva's intrinsic nature, the nāyaṉmār were creating a link to the literary and cultural past. This relationship would be evoked and reinforced when the term was heard within the parameters of the sung or recited hymns. What is of interest here is audience reception of language. Through the hymns the Śaiva community understood Śiva's fundamental nature to be catalogued as aruḷ; and, one would imagine, they also perceived themselves as a community to be potential beneficiaries of his aruḷ. In regards to the Tiruvācakam, one of the ways in which this was accomplished was through linking aruḷ to Śiva's exploits and his iconographic depictions. The earlier nāyaṉmār used a similar tactic, but none drew on aruḷ's theological weight as he did, associating it with virtually everything connected with Śiva. In doing so, Māṇikkavācakar conveyed the intention that everything Śiva undertakes is directed towards the liberation of souls.

§ 1.1 *Aruḷ* as Meta-Verb

One of the more interesting ways in which Māṇikkavācakar used *aruḷ* in the *Tiruvācakam* is employing it to infuse Śiva's actions with a sacrosanct efficacy. He frequently used *aruḷi*, the adverbial participle of √*aruḷ*, in compound to modify other verbs. In these contexts, *aruḷi* functions more as a meta-verb, rather than providing a specific lexical meaning, indicating the intention behind Śiva's manifesting and acting in the mundane world. While this type of compound appears in both the categories of memory and experience, it appears most frequently in the former because it is a function of narrating action and more poignantly, mythological action. In using verbal compounds

that terminate with a conjugation of *aruḷ*, Māṇikkavācakar was differentiating for his audience the nature of Śiva's actions from the actions of humans or other celestial deities. Using *aruḷ* in such a way gives a divine glow to all that Śiva undertakes. It also suggests that his actions are filled with love and compassion for his devotees.

For example, consider lines 25-6 in the hymn "Kīrttittiruvākaval" (Kīr.), the second hymn in the *Tiruvācakam*. In this line, Māṇikkavācakar uses the adverbial participle to qualify the manner in which Śiva and Umā manifested on earth—*ēṟuṭai īcaṉ ippuvaṉiyai uyya/ kūṟuṭai maṅkaiyun tāṉum vantaruḷi* ("The Lord of Bulls, He and the Lady who is part of him, mercifully came to protect this world"). In this line, *aruḷi* is in compound with *vantu* (adverbial participle of √*vā*, 'to come'), conveying the merciful manner in which they came to the world. In this compound, Māṇikkavācakar conveys well the dispostion that he understands Śiva to have for his slaves, *i.e.* one of love and protection.

Māṇikkavācakar frequently terminates *vantu* with *aruḷi* to describe why Śiva (and sometimes Umā) appears in the world. Lexically, as I have shown, translating *aruḷ* in English is not necessary, as previous translations of *nāyaṉmār* hymns have reflected. The action is conveyed prior to translating *aruḷi*; rather, the participle seems to be infusing the action and thus, the language with divine intention, efficacy, and compassion. Not translating the term, then, would disregard the author's creativity in conveying divine intention through language.

The question that arises at this point is whether or not one should translate *aruḷi*. In his translation of the *Tiruvācakam*, G. U. Pope did not translate *aruḷi* in this type of compound consistently; but when he did he rendered it with the adverb 'graciously.' This compound would read, then, as "graciously came...". I suggested in the introduction that if one understands 'grace' generally, not in a limited, Christian sense, then Pope's

translation does convey godly intention.[258] Without translating the term, however, one runs the risk of not conveying the full theological sense of the action or the action as the author conveyed it.

This translation issue underscores the difficulty in rendering well nuance in language, particularly religious vocabulary. Māṇikkavācakar is using *aruḷi* to qualify the act as being one infused with the sacred, an act that only Śiva could undertake. In Tamil, terminating the compound with *aruḷi* expresses Śiva's disposition towards those who are his slaves, and certainly sets this action apart from the actions of others. However, given what we know about what *aruḷ* signifies, as discussed above rather generally, how could a standardized translation capture all those shades of meaning? The short answer is that it cannot. However, when we remember that these lines were sung not only for the benefit of Śiva, but also for an audience, we are presented with a scenario far less complicated than what translation offers.

As a hymn was being sung, the nuances of *aruḷ* did not have to be explicated as the term was being used in compound with other verbs. In hearing such a compound in verse, all that *aruḷ* implied would reverberate in the minds of the audience. While an English translation, such as 'graciously' or 'mercifully,' may capture a certain aspect of what *aruḷ* conveys, it lacks the ability to resonate with its full theological tenor. In other words, the nuance that is so valuable to the Tamil audience is lost in translation.

Consider also one of Māṇikkavācakar's iconographic depictions of Śiva, *kaḻukkaṭai taṉṉai kai koṇṭu aruḷiyum/ mūlam ākiya mummalam aṟukkum* ("He mercifully (*aruḷiyum*) carries the trident in his hand and severs the three defilements that are the cause [of suffering]").[259] *Aruḷ* is modifying the way in which Śiva carries his trident or

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[258] See pp. 9-10.

[259] *Kīr*. 110-111.

kaḻukkaṭai, providing for the audience a way to understand the meaning of his iconographic forms. Māṇikkavācakar reminds his audience of the importance of Śiva's trident or, more poignantly, his *aruḷ*, to remove the defilements that anchor a person in this-worldly pursuits. In this context, his trident is an iconographic depiction of his *aruḷ*, and the adverbial participle is reinforcing this relationship. As Diana Eck points out, iconography is a visual theology. The representations in the sculpture can lead a person to the meaning behind the form.[260] Māṇikkavācakar's description does just that. Not only is he providing a context for his audience to recollect an image of Śiva bearing his trident, he is also explaining what that image ultimately conveys. I believe it would also be wise to consider the possibility that while Māṇikkavācakar was singing in a temple setting, there may have been images on the temple walls and his song was directing the audience to those images while giving a sort of theological tutorial about what the representations signified.

Māṇikkavācakar also used the adverbial participle to qualify the manner in which the *ākamam* (Skt. *āgama*) were revealed. As in the lines, *mā vēṭṭu āki ākamam vāṅkiyum/ maṟṟavai tammai makēntirattiruntu/uḷḷa aim mukaṅkaḷāl paṇittaruḷiyum* ("having become greatly desirous, he recovered the *ākamam*, and, moreover, from the Mountain Makēntira, he graciously revealed them with his five faces").[261] The adverbial participle terminates a compound with *paṇittu* (adverbial participle of √*paṇi*, 'to say,' 'to declare').

§ 1.2 *Aruḷ* as Blanketing Verb

In addition to using conjugations of *aruḷ* in compound with other verbs to give Śiva's action a divine and loving hue, Māṇikkavācakar also used the verb as the

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[260] Diana L. Eck, *Darśan*, p. 41.
[261] *Kīr.* 18-20.

blanketing term *par excellence*. In other words, he took advantage of the dynamism of the term and used it to convey a variety of disparate actions. In these instances the verb is functioning very much in the same way as the adverbial participle in the examples above. The difference, of course, is that *aruḷ* is not modifying another verb. For instance, in *Kīr*. 29, *vēlam puttūr viṭṭēṟ aruḷik*…("in Vēlamputtūr, [He] gave an army of spears…"). *Aruḷi* here is used to designate the act of giving the well-armed soldiers to Murukaṉ, one of Śiva's sons. Consider also *Kīr*. 33, *mōkkaṇiyaruḷiya muḻuttaḻaṉ mēṉi* ("He whose body is a flame, tied the feedbag"). The past tense, adjectival participle, *aruḷiya*, modifying Śiva's body is used here to designate the act of tying.

Furthermore, in *Kīr*. 90, we read, *puṟampaya mataṉil aṟampala aruḷiyuṅ* ("In Puṟampayam, he taught many virtues"). The adverbial participle here is translated as 'taught.'[262] A commentary on this line suggests that Māṇikkavācakar is referring to books of virtue (*aṟam*), which further suggests the *ākamam* texts.[263] If this is the proper way of reading this passage, then *aruḷi* could also be translated as "revealed" or "disseminated." Consider also *Kīr.* 63, *aṭṭamā citti aruḷiya atuvum* ("[He] explained the eight great powers"). Much like in the previous example, *aruḷ* is used here to describe the process of explicating proper wisdom. In all of these examples, receiving something from Śiva or being on the receiving end of one of his lessons on proper action and knowledge would, in and of itself, constitute receiving *aruḷ*, which is the catalyst for ridding one's soul of ignorance and achieving spiritual liberation. This is why, I presume, Māṇikkavācakar uses verbal forms of *aruḷ* to express these disparate actions. The verb here is self-referential, in that the verb is fundamentally referring to the process

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[262] *Kīr.* 90.

[263] *Tiruppuṟampayam eṉṉum patiyil nī aṟanūlkaḷai ceytaruḷiṉai* ("In the town called Tiruppuṟampayam, you revealed the books on religious duty"); see *Tiruvācakam*, com. Cuvāmi Citpavāṉantar (Tirupparāttuṟai: Sri Rāmakiruśṇa Tapōvaṉam, 2003), p. 166.

of receiving its nominal counterpart. Proper knowledge (*aruḷ*) is only possible through Śiva's *aruḷ*.

Māṇikkavācakar's use of various forms of *aruḷ* in this category describes Śiva's actions in the mundane world, differentiating his actions from those of ordinary people. In using *aruḷ* as a meta-verb, Māṇikkavācakar infused Śiva's actions with a divine "glow," which also suggests that his actions are performed in a loving attitude for his devotees. As I mentioned above, this is rather difficult to capture in English. It could be accomplished if one were to assign a systematic gloss; but doing so runs the risk of removing the cultural nuance from the term. In using *aruḷ* as an auxiliary verb, Māṇikkavācakar gave the term and all that was associated with it a mark of divinity. This is further substantiated by *aruḷ*'s ability to become a blanketing verb, forcing the audience (and translator) to interpret the action being conveyed. What is significant about this is that without knowledge of Śaiva mythology, it would prove difficult to interpret the specific action because Māṇikkavācakar retold tales of Śiva's exploits in an abridged fashion; however, using *aruḷ* in these instances, in a sense, made up for this approach because he captured the essence of the stories in a single word. Theologically, then, *aruḷ* could be substituted for any verb, as long as it is descriptive of Śiva's actions.

§ 2. *ARUḶ* IN EXPERIENCE

In regard to the second category, *aṉupavam* or experience, Māṇikkavācakar uses the nominal and verbal forms of *aruḷ* more specifically than he does in the former category; although the underlying sense is similar. Here, *aruḷ* is predominantly used to refer to the principle that is identified as Śiva and as the cause for eradicating ignorance. Māṇikkavācakar often describes Śiva and *aruḷ* in apposition. In *Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval* ("Sacred Song of Praise") 199, Māṇikkavācakar says, *ārā amutē aruḷē pōṟṟi* (You are grace! I extol You, ambrosia that does not satiate!). Occasionally, Māṇikkavācakar

simply uses the adjectival participle, *aruḷiya*, to refer to Śiva. For example, in *Kīr*. 143 Māṇikkavācakar says, *aruḷiya tirumukat taḻakuṟu cirunakai* ("there is a small smile on the beautiful face of the 'gracious [one]'"). In these examples, there is a direct identification of Śiva as *aruḷ*.

There are other passages in the *Tiruvācakam*, however, that indicate a separation between Śiva and *aruḷ*. These instances occur when Māṇikkavācakar is describing the ability of Śiva's *aruḷ* to eradicate ignorance or when he is trying to find a comparison to comprehend *aruḷ*. For instance, in *Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval* (*Pōṟ*.) 118-119, he says, *mūvēḻ cuṟṟam muraṇuṟu narakiṭai/ āḻā mēyaruḷ aracē pōṟṟi* ("I extol You, King, who bestows saving knowledge (*aruḷ*) on me and twenty-one generations, so we will not sink in disastrous hell"). In *Pōṟ*. 128 he compares Śiva's *aruḷ* to a mountain: *maṇṇiya tiruvaruḷ malaiyē pōṟṟi* ("I extol You, whose *aruḷ* is like an established mountain"). Again, in *Pōṟ*. 169-73, Māṇikkavācakar sings, *iruḷkeṭa aruḷum iṟavā pōṟṟi/ taḷarntē ṉaṭiyōṉ tamiyēn pōṟṟi/kaḷaṅōḷak karuta aruḷāy pōṟṟi/ añcēleṉṟiṅ karuḷāy pōṟṟi/nañcē amutā nayanāy pōṟṟi* ("I extol you, god who destroys darkness with grace (*aruḷ*)! I, your devotee, who is alone and has lost stability, extol You! I extol You, who bestows grace (*aruḷāy*)! I can get and think of liberation. You bestow grace (*aruḷāy*) on me, saying 'fear not in this world!' I extol You! I extol you who took the poison as ambrosia!"). In the sixth hymn, *Nīttal Viṇṇappam* ("Petition for Abandoning [Worldly Matters];" *NV*) 29-30, Māṇikkavācakar also sees *aruḷ* as the elixir that will purify his *tīviṉai* (negative *karma*)—*tīrkkiṉṟa vāṟeṉ piḻaiyainiṉ cīraruḷen koleṉṟuvērkkiṉṟa eṉṉai viṭuti kaṇṭāy* ("Will you abandon me, who is troubled inside, thinking that You will solve my faults with your grace (*aruḷ*) ?").

Māṇikkavācakar also uses *aruḷ* to refer to the highest spiritual path. In this context, *aruḷ* is synonymous with *ñāṉam* or knowledge. In Śaiva theology, one of the

paths that lead to *mutti* (Skt. *mukti*) or liberation is proper knowledge of Śiva. For the Tamil Siddhāntins, this is the highest path. For instance, in *Kīr*. 39-41 Māṇikkavācakar describes his conversion to Śaivism: *īṇṭu ka<u>n</u>akam icaiya peṟā a/āṇṭā<u>n</u> e<u>n</u> kō<u>n</u> aruḷ vaḻi iruppa/ tūṇṭu cōti tōṟṟiya to<u>n</u>maiyum* ("without the desire to accept a large amount of gold, my Lord enslaved me. I will be on the path of knowledge (*aruḷ*)—that is how he created the inspired light [in me]"). In this context, *aruḷ* designates the path that leads to *mutti*. Later in the hymn (*Kīr*. 117), Māṇikkavācakar discusses the benefits of that path—*mīṇṭu vāra vaḻi aruḷ puriva<u>n</u>* ("He shows the path of knowledge which stops return"). This path of proper knowledge or *aruḷ* liberates the soul from the cycle of rebirth.

Lastly, as I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the more frequent compounds in the text is *aṭkoṇṭaruḷi* (*aṭ*=√*aḷ*, 'to rule;' *koṇṭu*=adverbial participle of √*koḷ*, 'to take,' 'to hold;' *aruḷi*= adverbial participle of √*aruḷ*), which contextually translates as 'having enslaved [me].' 'Enslavement' refers to Māṇikkavācakar's induction into Śaivism and his role as a devotee or 'slave' of Śiva. The adverbial participle here not only acts as an auxiliary or meta-verb indicating the loving manner in which he was enslaved, but it also indicates that Śiva gave his *aruḷ* to him because his soul was ready to receive it. This compound also designates Śiva's simultaneous giving and taking. Śiva gives his *aruḷ* to the soon-to-be devotee and at the same time takes him into service.

§ 3. Mingling the Categories—Searching for Meaning

Māṇikkavācakar's use of *aruḷ* has interesting ramifications as we attempt to extract a cohesive meaning of how he understood the term. While we can say that the verb gives a loving, divine glow to his actions (as seen in both the use of *aruḷ* as a meta-verb and as a blanketing verb), it is also self-referential, in that it implies Śiva to be giving the substantive quality of the verb's nominal counterpart. When Māṇikkavācakar

uses the verb, he is also implying all those shades of meaning that adhere to the noun. In this way, then, *aruḷ* is both signifier and signified. In other words, the theology behind both the noun and the verb is identical.

§ 4. To Translate or Not To Translate?

This final section deviates a bit from the larger project to engage a practical issue—translation. This practice lies at the heart of the dissertation and is fundamental to Indology. Over the course of the past century and a half, scholars and practitioners have translated many of the hymns of the *nāyaṉmār* into English. This attention pays homage not only to their cultural importance, but also to the lyrical beauty of their works. To anyone whose business is the translation of poetry, the difficulties of rendering concepts and subtle nuances into English are all too familiar. The question of how to unpack a term and successfully translate those culturally significant shades of meaning from the source to the target language is a persistent one. As I indicated above, this is particularly relevant in attempting to translate *aruḷ*'s theological connotations in the framework of a devotional hymn while remaining faithful to its lexical and syntactical structure. This was indeed one of the more arduous tasks that I encountered while translating the *Tiruvācakam*. Past translations of the *nāyaṉmār*'s works have offered several courses of action; however, in my opinion, none have been very successful in accurately capturing all that *aruḷ* signifies. Perhaps the flaw lies in the belief that a standardized translation holding conceptual similarities to a target audience's religio-cultural sensibilities is most effective. The problem, of course, is that theological nuance does not translate neatly into the target language.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the most common English translation of *aruḷ* is 'grace.' I argued that the problem is not so much the term, but the standardized translation. 'Grace' indicates divine activity, presence, and intention generally and is not

the exclusive property of Christianity. A standardized translation does, in my opinion, equate the Tamil Śavia concept with Christian understanding of divine activity because it does not consider the religio-cultural tradition. In his English translation of the *Tiruvācakam* (1900), G. U. Pope, an Anglican missionary, systematically glossed *aruḷ* as 'grace.' While Pope was sincere about not wanting to cause any form of theological controversy, he was also unable to hide his "scant sympathy" for Śaiva precept and praxis.[264] Thus, glossing *aruḷ* as 'grace' systematically was a subtle or, more likely, an unwitting attempt to infuse Hindu theology with Christian doctrine. Pope also translated the *Tiruvācakam* in verse, and thus it reads very much like an Anglican hymnal. Consider, for instance, a selection of Pope's translation (lines 49 – 61) from the first hymn in the *Tiruvācakam*, the "Civapurāṇam:"

> Thou hast the colours five! While heavenly ones extolled
> Thou didst lie hid, our mighty Lord! In the strong grasp of deeds,
> I lay, hidden amid illusion's shrouding gloom.
> Thou binding with rare cords of virtue and of sin,
> Didst clothe with outer skin, enveloping with worms and filth,
> Within my nine-gated dwelling foul bewildered,
> By the five senses sore deceived,
> To me, mean as I was, with no good thing, Thou didst grant grace,
> That I, with mind erewhile embruted,—pure one!—should
> Become commingling love, in soul-subduing rapture melt!
> Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show Thy mighty
> feet
> To me who lay mere slave,—meaner than any dog—
> Essential grace more precious than a mother's love!

On the one hand, I think that there is something elegant about this passage. The rhythm of word choice and word placement is captivating; but it certainly targets an audience of a different generation. While I am reluctant to disparage Pope's enormous contribution to the study of Tamil language and literature, one is hard pressed not to see

[264] G.U. Pope, *The Tiruvāçagam*, p. xi.

Christian sensibilities in this translation and his consistent word choice of 'grace.' Pope, it is true, had a great respect for the Tamil language and people, and wrote fondly of Māṇikkavācakar. However, this aside, he was wedded to his own faith in ways that prevented his translation from bringing English-speaking Europeans closer to understanding Tamil culture and particularly, the theology of Śaiva *bhakti*. I do not want to overstate my position here. Certainly the mere publication of Pope's translation of the *Tiruvācakam* was a gigantic step towards bridging the cultural gap. Pope, however, predicted that the circulation of the book in Europe would not be encouraging.[265] This prophecy reveals a certain disparaging sentiment that he held for the tradition that he studied. Unfortunately, I know nothing of the translation's reception in England or elsewhere—that is a project for another time. It is difficult for me to believe, though, that his translations and expositions did not impact the subsequent generations of Christian missionaries in south India.

There are perhaps three reasons for Pope's decision to translate *aruḷ* as 'grace' consistently. The first, of course, was his allegiance to an Anglican worldview in which God's grace is an active principle. *Aruḷ*, too, is an active principle in Tamil Śaiva cosmology, and does indicate some similarity to Christian ideals of God's grace. In the Christian context, grace may be understood as the power of God to help one follow Christ's teachings despite the evils and difficulties of human life.[266] Structurally, one can replace 'God' with 'Śiva' and substitute 'Śiva's teachings' for 'Christ' and arrive at a very similar concept. There are other religio-cultural distinctions, however, where the two concepts diverge, *e.g.* Śiva's activity in the mundane world; ideas about what *aruḷ* offered upon death; and the effort it took to receive it. Nevertheless, *aruḷ* is Śiva's power

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[265] Pope, *op. cit*., p. ix.

[266] Thomas O'Meara, "Grace," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* vol. 6, 2nd edition, p. 3644.

that guides a person beyond materiality (and the ensuing suffering) to the path of knowledge, which can free the soul from *saṃsāra* or rebirth. It seems that Pope's standardized translation was a response to *aruḷ* being an active principle in Tamil Śaiva theology; however, *aruḷ*'s function encompasses more than Christian notions of god's grace, particularly as it is delineated in the philosophy of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta (c. thirteenth century CE), though Pope would disagree. He writes in the introduction:

> The prominence given in the Çaiva Siddhānta to the operations of Divine Grace is remarkable. The Tamil word *Aruḷ* is used in every sense given to Χάρις in the New Testament, and חסד in the Hebrew. As Māṇikka-Vāçagar uses the word constantly, I have translated Umāpathi's Chapter IV…[267]

Pope believed that the concept of divine grace in the Tamil Śaiva tradition was identical to that in Christianity and Judaism. The statement above is odd given that Pope was very welll-versed in both the theological and devotional aspects of Tamil Śaivism.

The second reason for Pope consistently translating *aruḷ* as 'grace' stems from the influence that the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy had on his understanding of Tamil Śaivism in general. The chapter to which Pope is referring above comes from Umāpaticivācāriyar's prominent fourteenth-century philosophical text, the *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* ("Fruit of Sacred *Aruḷ*"). This text was the first thorough systematization of *aruḷ* in Siddhāntin philosophy. *Aruḷ* had certainly been expounded upon in other Siddhāntin texts prior to Umāpati's composition; however, none of the authors treated the concept with as much attention as did Umāpati, devoting an entire work to the exposition of its nature. The fourth chapter of the *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ* elaborates on the knowledge necessary for a soul's liberation as imparted in the form of *aruḷ*. Providing this and other background information (most coming from Siddhāntin doctrines of the *guru* or teacher,

[267] Pope, *op. cit.*, p. xlviii.

of fetters (*pantam*) and liberation (*mutti*), and of *catti nipātam* (cessation of energy), which refers to the end of that property of Śiva that veils ultimate reality from humans), Pope undoubtedly assisted his target audience in understanding better Tamil Śaiva metaphysics.

The problem, though, is that Siddhāntin expositions on the nature of *aruḷ*, among other concerns, are anachronistic when applied to Tamil Śaiva *bhakti*. Chronologically, the Tamil Siddhāntin school began in the mid-twelfth century (ca. 1147 CE), almost three hundred years after the composition of the *Tiruvācakam*; and Umāpati's *Tiruvaruṭpayan̲* was composed about one hundred and sixty years after that (1307 CE).[268] I would not go so far as to say that there exists little in terms of a relationship between the categories that the *nāyan̲mār* sung about and those that the later Siddhāntins elucidated. In fact, as I demonstrated in chapter three, utilizing categories found in the later tradition may assist in reading the hymns differently because there is an intimate relationship between the traditions. One must keep in mind, however, that the positions of the two groups were different. The Śaiva Siddhāntins believed proper philosophical knowledge to be the vehicle that would escort one to experiencing Śiva, and personal surrender and devotion led the *nāyan̲mār* to this experience; and in the case of Māṇikkavācakar, he combined his devotion with proper knowledge.

As Karen Prentiss points out, Umāpati took a special interest in the hymns of the *nāyan̲mār*, particularly those collected in the *Tēvāram*.[269] He collected ninety-nine hymns from the *Tēvāram* and categorized them under ten headings—God, soul, bond,

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[268] Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, p. 135 and p. 240 fn. 9.

[269] While Umāpati elaborated on themes in the hymns of the *Tēvāram* to shore up his arguments, as I mentioned previously, Nirampavaḻakiya Tecikar, who wrote the sixteenth-century commentary on the *Tiruvaruṭpayan̲*, used Māṇikkavācakar as his primary example when drawing on themes from the *nāyan̲mār*.

aruḷ, guru, methodology, enlightenment, bliss, mantra, and liberation—as a means to link Siddhāntin philosophy with the *nāyaṉmār*.[270] The results of Umāpati's endeavor are located in the anthology *Tēvāra Aruḷmuṟaittiraṭṭu*. Prentiss suggests that the author's interest in the *nāyaṉmār* was both in identifying a heritage of Tamil authors who wrote on the nature of Śiva and a soul's relationship to him based on direct experience, and in the nature of their religious path, which did not hinge on a temple ritual.[271]

What was most significant for the Siddhāntins was the *nāyaṉmār*'s direct experience of Śiva. However, the Siddhāntins believed that this experience was only understood through philosophical elucidation, not through any expressions in the hymns or in the hagiographies. While the Siddhāntins drew upon the themes found in the earlier *bhakti* hymns, they ultimately saw their tradition as having expanded the concepts in the hymns, and thus, as having surpassed the *bhakti* tradition itself.[272] This proclaimed advancement in understanding and knowledge suggests in and of itself a departure from the ways in which the *nāyaṉmār* understood and used concepts.

What we have, then, is a difference of perspective between the two groups. The Siddhāntins viewed the world and humans categorically, giving to their various components a taxonomic structure that does not necessarily exist in the hymns of the Śaiva *bhaktas*. They had determined how these categories worked together or against one another to either impede or promote a soul's liberation, and they wrote on the subject extensively.

The *nāyaṉmār*, on the other hand, described the world more fluidly and organically. They sung about Śiva's heroic actions in the world, developed metaphors

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[270] These ten categories also correspond to the ten chapters of Umāpati's *Tiruvaruṭpayaṉ*. Ibid., p. 140.
[271] For a reading on the Siddhāntins eschewing temple ritual, see Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, Ch.8.
[272] Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* , pp. 140-2.

from nature, described the physical effects from those moments of rapture and of being caught in the snares of a woman's gaze. Their compositions suggest that they experienced a turbulent, almost violent oscillation of emotions and moods in the soul's struggle for liberation. Their main concern was for their own direct experience of Śiva in a world that enticed the senses and promoted delusion.

In their quest for direct experience they certainly posed philosophical questions, sometimes by way of metaphor and others through questioning technical terminology from the religious vocabulary. While their questions were all fundamentally concerned with the nature of Śiva and the soul's relationship to him, and oriented towards the conditions for their souls' emancipation, to a great extent the questions were existential in nature. Their methodology was less microscopic, largely unconcerned with a rigorous systematization of the cosmic building blocks. They were mystics, not philosophers or theologians. It is not difficult, though, to see how the Siddhāntins could easily have extrapolated the wider, objective categories they did from the autobiographical records of the *nāyaṉmār*.

As I mentioned above, the Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntin influence on Pope is another reason why he systematically glossed *aruḷ* with 'grace.' In his study of Tamil Śaivism, he came to regard the Siddhāntin system as deserving of having the greatest influence on religious thought in south India.[273] Indeed, the Siddhāntins were a formidable collection of theologians, as is evident in their prolific textual production over the course of more than two centuries. I imagine that Pope, positing an unbroken continuum between Śaiva *bhakti* theology and that of the Siddhāntins, grappled with the best way to translate the term in the *Tiruvācakam* in light of his understanding of Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntin

[273] G.U.Pope, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

systematization. Since the theological and cultural differences prevent any one-to-one correlation between *aruḷ* and an English term, he chose 'grace' because it too was heavily endowed with a theological structure, albeit imprecise. This brings us to the third reason behind Pope's word choice.

The audience that Pope was targeting was primarily English-speaking Europeans, but also those Indians literate in Pope's mother tongue. In regard to the latter, he was keen to begin a religio-cultural dialogue with the end result being the adoption of Christianity in favor of Hinduism. As he writes in the introduction to the translation:

> I may safely take it for granted that my indulgent Tamil friends will not shrink from…Christian compositions, because they are full of the unstinted praises of Him Whom all acknowledge as the noblest, purest, best, and most self-sacrificing of those who have worn the garment of our mortality,—any more than I have shrunk from long and appreciative study of poems containing very much with which I can have but scanty sympathy. 'Scrutinize all things: hold fast that which is good!'[274]

Although Pope is not explicitly forthcoming with his intention, the above quotation is indicative of the impetus behind his work in India, and most certainly resonated with his Christian audience in England and elsewhere. Understanding his drive to proselytize perhaps accounts for why he chose to translate the text in verse. He claims that he was merely preserving something of the text's rhythm.[275] This statement leaves one wanting a deeper explanation for his motivation. It is true that both the original text and his translation have certain metrical/rhythmic components, but there are vast cultural differences between the original and his translation. Did he believe that he was preserving the Tamil metrical system in his work or were there grander designs behind

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[274] G. U. Pope, *op.cit*., p. xi.
[275] G. U. Pope, *op. cit*., p. xiv.

this exercise? Was he providing a glimpse of the structure of Christian literature to his Tamil audience? Unfortunately, at this juncture it is difficult to state with certainty his motivation to translate the text the way he did. What is apparent, though, is that English literary norms that his target audience held had a bearing on the ways in which he translated the *Tiruvācakam*.

For a translation to resonate within a target audience, the translator must conform to the contemporaneous literary norms of that audience more so than the inherent structure of a text. The target culture does not accept the translation based on its quality or its exactitude to an original. It craves the sense of the text—faithfulness to its essence and not to its letter. A lack of linguistic equivalence between languages forces a translator to interpret linguistic codes, to elucidate the syntactical and lexical structures of one language by means of another. Thus, the translator is constantly searching for modes of expression in the target language that will best convey the sense of the source language because there can be no precise transference of structure and/or nuance between languages. This places the translator in a precarious position. On the one hand, the translator is bound to the text in the source language, otherwise the translation would not be a translation, while on the other, the translator must be faithful to the shifting literary norms of the target audience.

There is, in the words of Palma Zlateva, a pre-text that exists in every target culture. The pre-text is the set of cultural attitudes that control the success or failure of a translation.[276] This pre-text manifests itself not only in the literary tastes of the target culture, but also in the criterion of publishing houses, journals, and the popular media.

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[276] Palma Zlateva, "Translation: Text and Pre-Text. 'Adequacy' and 'Acceptability' in Cross-cultural Communication," in *Translation, Histroy and Culture*, eds. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 29-37.

These cultural attitudes, of course, are never in stasis, but are constantly evolving. Thus, a translator is bound to the literary norms that a particular target culture demands. This does not mean, however, that the translator should rewrite the original text willy-nilly. The syntactical structures and lexical nuances do provide a framework within which to operate, but it is well agreed upon that a translation is, in fact, a rewriting of the source text. It is a rewriting that represents the original. Thus, rather than merely one text existing upon translation, there are two. As A. K. Ramanujan said, "that is why nothing less than a poem can translate another [poem]."[277] Thus, if translations are indeed rewritings of the source text, then they must conform to the literary norms of the target audience more so than the structure of the original.

It is highly probable that a text translated fifty years ago would be considered out of date today. In fact, the same text translated in the past twenty years would probably encounter the same criticism. Why? This could be ascribed to individual interpretation, and certainly this is part of it, but I hesitate to place all the difference on the shoulders of individual translators. This removes them from the world in which they work, the world that shapes their experiences and knowledge. This criticism is fundamentally directed at the system of literary norms that a translator utilized, a system that was once in vogue, but now not.

Another aspect of Pope's translation that is noteworthy and speaks to the cultural negotiation that he undertook in translating, is his decision not to translate any imagery associated with the female form. Māṇikkavācakar describes himself as being constantly plagued by his attraction to women. Consider, for instance, lines 30-35 from the fourth hymn, the "Pōṟṟi Tiruvakaval," that we saw earlier:

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[277] A.K. Ramanujan, "On Translating a Tamil Poem," in *The Collected Essays of A.K. Ramanujan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 230.

> I survived the captivation of the sharp eyes of women with black hair,
> red lips, and white teeth, whose appearance is like a peacock in the rainy
> season;
> of their breasts, pressed together, blooming full inside, standing up, the
> *kaccu* cloth
> breaking, spreading radiance; as the breasts expand at the top, the waists
> of the women grow tired, they suffered; their breasts having risen, sides
> expanding, so the midrib of a palm leaf could not be placed
> between them.

Now consider Pope's translation of the same lines:

> Jet black locks, and crimson lips, and radiant smiles were hers;—
> into love's sea I plunged. 31-35

. . . .

As one can plainly see, Pope removed all imagery of the female form from his translation, summarizing Māṇikkavācakar's words with "into love's sea I plunged." Certainly, this decision was instigated by Victorian morality and Anglican dogma, in essence the demands of his target audience. While I do not wish to fault a person for living in a particular era and following the mores of that time, for I too will be subject to such criticism, this abridged translation does reveal the influence that one's background and societal restrictions have on translation. As I have worked with translating the *Tiruvācakam*, it is difficult for me to count the times when I believed that I was translating in a vacuum, was unfettered by anything in the world. It was just me, the text, and my dictionary. How wrong I was! I have attempted to remain faithful to the lexical and semantic structure of the text, but it still remains difficult to gauge the weight of the external influences upon my decisions in translating.

As we return to Pope's systematic gloss of *aruḷ* as 'grace,' it is perhaps easier to understand why he chose this translation. His faith, his understanding of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta theology (which was also colored with Christian dogma), and the demands of

his target audience all influenced the ways in which he translated the text and, particularly *aruḷ*.

A second translation of *aruḷ* I would like to engage, albeit more briefly, is one from a contemporary scholar, who translated a seventh-century Śaiva *bhakti* text. In *Songs of the Harsh Devotee—The Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṉār* (1990), David Shulman consistently translates *aruḷ* as 'mercy.'[278] While this work is an enormous contribution to the study of medieval Tamil literature and his translations are excellent, this standardized translation does little to convey what *aruḷ* embodies. It does speak to the fundamental disposition that Śiva has for his slaves, however. I have no doubt that Shulman chose 'mercy' in response to the Orientalist tendency to translate *aruḷ* as 'grace' programmatically.

Similar to the concerns I raised with Pope, I feel that Shulman's systematic translation of *aruḷ* as 'mercy' does little in elucidating the workings of the concept. In his translation, perhaps we are witnessing the beginnings of an ideological positioning that comes to fruition fourteen years later. In *Śiva and the Forest of Pines* (2004), Shulman and Don Handelman write:

> There is an unfortunate tendency to translate this critical term [*aruḷ*], in nearly every context, as 'grace,' with its heavy Christian connotations. *Aruḷ* can, it is true, correspond in Śaiva texts to Sanskrit *anugraha*, the god's compassionate giving to his servants. More often, however, it approximates a notion of coming into being or freely becoming present, close, alive…*Aruḷ*, for the Siddhântins, is a *śakti*—an active and female aspect of Śiva. Not 'grace' but 'emergent presence.' It, or she, is dynamic and oriented toward freedom…an experiential process of *full*, unconstricted potentiality.[279]

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[278] David Shulman, *Songs of the Harsh Devotee: The Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṉār* (Philadelphia: Department of South Asia Regional Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1990).
[279] Don Handelman and David Shulman, *Śiva in the Forest of Pine*, pp. 40-1.

This explanation of *aruḷ* is markedly different from the sense found in Shulman's earlier translations. One reason for this difference hinges on the nature of the analysis of the texts in question. Handelman and Shulman root their work in Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntin metaphysics. While there is certain continuity between the two groups of Śaiva authors, the poets used the term in a much more flexible manner. Although using a standardized translation ossifies the concept and provides little to no insight into Śaiva theology, Shulman's use of 'mercy' does hit at the core of what Śaiva *bhakti* is about.

One achievement of both Pope and Shulman's translations is that they reveal the complexity of translating conceptual nuances in a hymn or poem. To a great degree, standardized translations are due to the limitations of the genre itself. I fully agree that *aruḷ* designates a process of experiencing or realizing the maturation of the soul's potential. How, then, does one convey that sense in English translation?

One must remember that *bhakti* poems were sung and nuances of the lyrics were able to conjure images in the minds and hearts of the audience. When members of the audience heard the word *aruḷ* being sung in a hymn, they undoubtedly understood much that the tradition conveyed about the intricacies of the concept. For a translator, it is incredibly difficult to communicate all those shades of meaning to one's target audience, while remaining faithful to the structure of the source text.

In consistently translating *aruḷ* as 'mercy,' Shulman was attempting to provide his target audience with an insight into the relationship that Śiva has with his devotees. In a very general way, he was successful. I fully agree that *aruḷ* conveys an experiential process. In fact, one of the reasons it is so difficult to translate succinctly in poetry is *because* it designates an experiential process. However, I would argue that a standardized translation, like 'mercy,' is structurally similar to translating *aruḷ* as 'grace.' This begs the question, then: how is one to translate succinctly this term for one's target

audience, capturing the cultural and theological nuances that resonate with when the term is heard or read?

One must remain flexible in translation. There is never an exact correspondence, but a translator may be able to hint at all that a concept coveys in using terms that are culturally relevant for the target audience. This is why I do not believe the translation 'grace' is problematic. It does carry the weight of centuries of Christian theology; however, when it is applied generally, it resonates with divine activity, and not necessarily in the Christian sense; translations such as 'mercy' and 'love' also strike at the core of *aruḷ*'s conceptual field. Thus, it is important to allow the context to dictate how one translates *aruḷ*. Otherwise, one runs the risk of negating the religio-cultural importance.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In tracing *aruḷ*'s semantic development across these three genres of Tamil literature, what is most striking is its breadth of significance. Its conceptual and semantic range is extensive. As I have shown, analyzing only the lexical value of the term does not quite lead us to answering why this term is so dynamic. In the *caṅkam* corpus, *aruḷ* indicated elements of the ideal king and archetypal amorous relationships; in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*, *aruḷ* signified the energy of Śiva that removes ignorance and frees a soul from the cycle of rebirth or *saṃsāra*; it also designates the loving disposition that Śiva has for his slaves—all actions are geared towards the emancipation of the soul; and in later Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntin thought, *aruḷ* is explicitly glossed as the Sanskrit term *śakti* or energy from which matter arises and, as in the *Tiruvācakam*, assists in releasing the soul from the bonds of ignorance. Thus, there must be other considerations, specifically ones of a cultural and theological nature, to understand the history of *aruḷ* in Tamil literature.

Despite the context, one of the more poignant aspects of all the characters is their desperation to experience *aruḷ*—the bards of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* pleaded with the kings to shower them with *aruḷ*; the heroines in the *akam* anthologies longed for the return of their lover's *aruḷ*; and in the hymns of the *Tiruvācakam*, Māṇikkavācakar constantly wailed, chastising himself (and occassionally Śiva) for not having experienced the full effects of his *aruḷ*. Why, then, were these actors so hungry to receive it?

One conclusion is that *aruḷ* often implies a transformative experience, and in many cases this is a two-way process—the recipient is transformed and the bestower, too, experiences the act of transformation. Receiving *aruḷ* necessarily alters one's current reality in a positive way. As we saw, such a transformation could take the form of

monetary gain, of emotional health and stability, or of spiritual liberation. While these outcomes are radically different structurally for the actors involved, receiving *aruḷ* was of utmost importance. There is no case that I have witnessed in which receiving *aruḷ* is an impediment to growth; but life without it, as most of the actors seemed to describe, is miserable.

This transformative experience is based in hierarchical relationships. For the receiver, the underlying sense is that it concerns receiving some form of blessing or favor from a higher up—king to bard, lover to beloved, or god to devotee. The concept's nature and transformative power depends on the genre. It is clear from the Śaiva literature that Śiva is the only one possessed of *aruḷ*, and since he is divine, Śiva is necessarily situated at the pinnacle of any hierarchy. The term's inclusion in the technical Śaiva religious vocabulary, by definition, excluded humans as its source. There is a transferal away from *aruḷ* only indicating a human disposition to indicating, first and foremost, a divine energy responsible for the emancipation of the soul's innate potential—freedom of *saṃsāra*.

The concept in *caṅkam* poetry is not as well delineated as in the *Tiruvācakam*. For one, the term does not appear nearly as frequently. Thus, the relatively few contexts in which it appears limits the conclusions that may be drawn. Nonetheless, *aruḷ*'s usage in the *caṅkam* context, I believe, provided a firm foundation for the term's later theological principles. Let us review what we have seen.

In the *akam* anthologies, *aruḷ* is a constituent in the vocabulary of love and emotion. The hierarchy in this context is not nearly as rigid as it is in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. It is an "interior" hierarchy, always subject to adjustment. If you will recall, *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*. 46 and 132 details wayward husbands or lovers returning to their partners after a tryst with a *parattai* (other woman), asking for reconciliation, thus, giving power to the

unhappy woman. In *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 480, a chieftain is accused of lacking *aruḷ* for fulfilling his official duty. The grieving wife's messenger, a bard, informs the ruler that because he does not care for his wife, then he is no longer loyal to him. We saw a very similar context in *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 145. The bard threatens the king that his maltreatment of his wife will find its way into compositions for all to hear if he does not alter his behavior.

In the *akam* context, I think of *aruḷ* as indicating 'duty' and 'sexual favor'; however, there was an instance (*Akanāṉūṟu* 53) where it signified a duty to humanity, indicating compassion on a grand scale. Despite this particular case, *aruḷ* in Tamil love poetry helped define the ideal amorous relationship; but ideals exist for the attaining, and rarely are they actualized. Those who desire to experience their lover's *aruḷ* longed to be the favored—sexually or otherwise—and demanded companionship that would provide emotional stability. When *aruḷ* was missing from their lives, they would lose body mass, have misperceptions in their judgement, and descend into an emotional winter.

In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, *aruḷ* was placed alongside other terms in the royal vocabulary, indicating a quality of the ideal, archetypal ruler. Structurally, the kings were situated at the top of a hierarchy, bestowing *aruḷ* on their bards and subjects. They had the power to uplift, motivate, and bring their minions to a different level of existence, either through alleviating hunger, poverty, or elevating social prestige. This also implied that the kings had to work to maintain and cultivate *aruḷ*—the disposition was not perceived as permanent. Acquiring it, therefore, was also an experiential process for the kings. They had to learn to resist the corruption of power and place the interests of the kingdom above their own personal pleasures. They had to be fair and just, and this extended beyond merely ruling but to their personal lives as well. The kings were to be magnanimous in all that they undertook.

The results of losing *aruḷ*, becoming self-centered, unjust, and power hungry, were described as incurring an unforgivable perdition, everlasting hell, and they would ultimately lose their subjects' loyalty. It also guaranteed that their ignominy would be recounted posthumously in the bards' songs, a result that many ought not desire; and the inverse to this was gaining entry into heaven with a driverless sky chariot, being beloved by the subjects, and knowing that the bards would recount their glory.

What I find fascinating with both of these genres is that *aruḷ* is focused upon in the poems because it is absent. In the *akam* anthologies, the beloved is always separated from her lover's *aruḷ* despite the mood of the poem. In those poems set in the *tiṇai* of *kuriñci*, for instance, the heroine was either longing for another tryst (*Aiṅkuṟuṉūṟu* 275) or mollifying her friend's anguish that was brought on because the lover had been away for some time (*Akanāṉūṟu* 72). Even in the latter piece, the heroine is unable to bask in the comfort of having received it because she must respond to her friend's emotional torment. There is no doubt that in those poems set in the *tiṇai* of *kuṟiñci* that separation from emotional favoritism is the theme. In the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the bards are discussing *aruḷ* in their songs *because* the kings have yet to actualize its principles. They were reminding them of the power they had over social memory (in the form of song). These compositions were warnings that it is best to actualize *aruḷ* in all aspects of life.

Śaiva theology certainly instigated *aruḷ*'s semantic freedom. The latitude with which *aruḷ* was used in the *Tiruvācakam* was not present in classical poetry. Ideas on kingship, love, and the desires of the bards circumscribed *aruḷ*'s semantic range. The elements that were carried over from the earlier genres seems to have been the notion of hierarchy and receiving favor from a higher up, which were infused with love and compassion. These cultural considerations only suggest why the term was adopted; it is the theological considerations that point to how the semantic range was widened.

Theologically, the ways in which Śiva and *aruḷ* are linked are not entirely clear in the *Tiruvācakam*. Śiva is portrayed as being *aruḷ*, while at the same time imparting it. Is he imparting elements of himself or some other principle that is not necessarily himself, but not separate either? In Siddhāntin thought, Śiva and his *aruḷ* are not the same, nor are they separate. In other words, Śiva is constantly in a state of experiencing and being experienced.[280] It seems that Śiva's simultaneous giving of his *aruḷ* and inducting a devotee strikes the core of this thought— Śiva is both experiencing his *aruḷ* in the form of a devotee and being experienced by the devotee himself. Śiva manifests himself to his devotees through his *aruḷ* (mercy, compassion, generosity), as we saw in chapter three, when *aruḷ* describes his appearance in a temple or shrine. In this sense, *aruḷ* is responsible for bringing devotees into contact with Śiva. They are then able to feed, so to speak, on his presence, and realize proper knowledge. Consider, for instance, lines 25-32 from Māṇikkavācakar's "Civapurāṇam":

> I am a man of evil deeds; I do not comprehend the way
> to praise you.
> I was grass, a small plant, a worm, a tree,
> Many wild beasts, a bird, a snake,
> Stones, asuras, ascetics, God—
> In these movable and immovable objects
> I was born and served, my God!
> In truth, seeing your golden feet today I am liberated!

Being in Śiva's presence was a means by which Māṇikkavācakar was able to experience his *aruḷ* and begin the process towards liberation through burning the karma accrued from past actions. There seems to be gradations of Śiva's *aruḷ*, however. Using the word 'gradations' may not be the best way to describe Śiva's divine principle. Let me qualify. When Śiva initially imparts his *aruḷ* to enslave a person, they are then on the

[280] David Shulman and Don Handleman, *Śiva in the Forest of Pines*, pp. 39-44.

path towards liberation; and once on that path, *aruḷ* begins to burn karma. As Māṇikkavācakar demonstrated, merely receiving *aruḷ* is not quite sufficient for liberation. He received Śiva's *aruḷ* the moment he was enslaved in Perunturai, and yet still fell off the path when the five senses overwhelmed his spiritual discipline. Thus, he cried to Śiva to burn the deeds from his soul. The control that the five senses had over his discipline indicates that experiencing Śiva's *aruḷ* was only the first step in a longer process of transformation. Māṇikkavācakar implies that one must maintain one's grip on the path of knowledge for *aruḷ* to complete its work of burning away the karma of past actions. Thus, the mundane world is the perfect arena for the soul to resist temptation and meditate on fundamental reality.

These 'gradations' of *aruḷ* were not present in the *caṅkam* literature. Either a person received it or they did not. There does not seem to be a partial imparting. This is because *aruḷ* indicated, fundamentally, a disposition. *Aruḷ* may be translated in numerous ways that speak to this temperament, but as I mentioned several times, these glosses—generosity, benevolence, mercy, duty, sexual favor, etc.—are all by-products of a particular magnanimous, altruistic disposition. The reason for this difference seems as simple as the distinction between mortal and divine actors. While humans worked to cultivate and maintain *aruḷ*, Śiva does not need to; however, the Śaiva slaves need to nurture it within themselves through their own actions.

The last detail that needs to be recalled that the verb *aruḷ* has the ability to designate any action that Śiva undertakes, for all that he does is for the benefit of souls. The kings and lovers from the classical period could only dream of having their actions described in such an auspicious manner, but for them *aruḷ* was an ideal to be attained; in Śaiva theology, it is the central principle, save for Śiva himself. Thus, *aruḷ* becomes Śiva's identity marker *par excellence*.

As we consider *aruḷ*'s position in Tamil Śaiva theology, we must bear in mind the history of the term. Its original conception (or the earliest documented use) did not bear the theological nuances that it came to convey beneath the Śaiva banner; and indeed the term has undergone semantic evolution since the time of Māṇikkavācakar. It is not merely enough to pick up a text on Śaiva theology in order to understand the cultural and theological nuances of the term. No. It is always best to look to the past and understand the development of a concept, for that will provide the greatest insight.

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